

# INSPECTION REPORT

**Holmer Green Senior School**

High Wycombe, Buckinghamshire

LEA area: Buckinghamshire

Unique reference number: 110499

Headteacher: David Gilbert

Lead inspector: Michael Miller

Dates of inspection: 18<sup>th</sup> - 22<sup>nd</sup> October 2004

Inspection number: 268831

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

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## **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Type of school:	Modern (non-selective)
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	11 - 18
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll;	864
School address:	Parish Piece Holmer Green High Wycombe Buckinghamshire
Postcode:	HP15 6SP
Telephone number:	01494 712219
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Bob Bird
Date of previous inspection:	May 1999

## **CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL**

Holmer Green Senior School is situated in Holmer Green, to the north-east of High Wycombe in Buckinghamshire. It is a community secondary modern school for students aged 11 to 18 (Years 7 to 13). It is about the same size as most other secondary schools. There are 864 pupils on roll, 413 girls and 451 boys, including 98 sixth form students. The school's sixth form is smaller in size than most other sixth forms and 17 students from partner schools attend courses at Holmer Green. The school is about the same size as it was at the time of the previous inspection. It is currently over-subscribed and the numbers entering the school after Year 7 and leaving the school before Year 11 are average. Most pupils live outside the catchment area and travel to school by public transport or private car. The attainment of pupils on entry to the main school is below average and well below average for the sixth form. Most pupils are from white ethnic backgrounds. Some 10 per cent of pupils are from other ethnic groups and a high proportion of parents, a further 20 per cent, have chosen not to disclose their ethnic origin. The numbers of pupils whose mother tongue is not, or believed not to be, English is very low at under 1 per cent. Employment rates in the area are above the national average. At some 2 per cent, the proportion of pupils registered for free school meals is well below average. Some 14 per cent of pupils are on the register of special educational needs, which is broadly average. At over 4 per cent, the proportion of pupils having Statements of Special Educational Need is above average in the main school, but at just over 1 per cent it is low in the sixth form. The school gained an Achievement Award in 2003 and an Excellence in Mentoring Award in 2004.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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1165	Peter Dannheisser	Lay inspector	
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24453	Gordon Jackson	Team inspector	Science
31385	Neil Gillespie	Team inspector	Information and communication technology
30518	Mike Johnson	Team inspector	Art and design
17156	Ted Graham	Team inspector	Design and technology Special educational needs English as an additional language
4317	Ken Madrell	Team inspector	Geography Religious education
24127	Jim Kidd	Team inspector	History Work-related learning
27082	Geoffrey Henshall	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages Business education
22501	Sue Jones	Team inspector	Music
32225	Christine Hough	Team inspector	Citizenship Physical education
32166	Nasim Butt	Team inspector	Sixth form biology
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## PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

### OVERALL EVALUATION

Holmer Green Senior School is a **good** and effective school, with significant strengths. It provides a **good** quality of education for its pupils and students and gives **good** value for money. There is a clear determination to raise standards and achievement, with an inclusive concern for individuals within the school. The pupils and students know their teachers have something good to offer them.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The above average standards and good achievement of pupils in national tests and examinations, particularly when compared with other secondary modern schools.
- The very good leadership of the headteacher, resulting in high expectations for the school.
- The good and improving ethos of the school is leading to very good working relationships between staff, pupils and students.
- The overall good quality of teaching, which underpins the good learning by pupils and students.
- The good data provided to enable the tracking of pupils' progress, and for target setting, is not used consistently well across all subjects.
- The school's approach to providing for its gifted or talented, higher attaining pupils and students, in order to enable the achievement of higher grades in examinations, is not fully developed.
- Provision for pupils with learning difficulties is very good, and excellent in its specialist unit.
- The school's literacy policy and approach to the National Strategy are insufficiently well established across all subjects.
- Some structural problems associated with the drainage of the school site cause flooding at times, which affects the welfare and safety of the pupils, students and staff.

Improvement since the previous inspection, in November 1999, has been good overall. There is now a good approach to monitoring, self-evaluation and development planning. Subject development planning is now more securely linked to whole-school planning and priorities. Opportunities for the professional development of staff are now good. Provision in modern languages is now good. Satisfactory action has been taken to improve the quality of the school's accommodation, but some issues remain unresolved. Provision for the teaching of religious education now meets statutory requirements. However, the school does not fully meet the legal requirements for a daily act of collective worship for all pupils and students.

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Pupils' attainment on entry to the school is below average. Pupils make good progress to Year 9 and this is maintained satisfactorily to Year 11, so pupils achieve well by Years 9 and 11. Compared with all other secondary modern schools, pupils' attainment in national tests and examinations is well above average by Years 9 and 11 and above average for all schools nationally. Standards in literacy and pupils' competency in mathematics and information and communication technology (ICT) are average by Years 9 and 11. The achievement of pupils with a special educational need is good. Those whose mother tongue is not English, or who are at an early stage of English language development, achieve well. Those pupils who have been identified as gifted, talented or gifted and talented, achieve satisfactorily. Pupils' attendance, behaviour and personal development are good. Their punctuality is satisfactory and pupils' attitudes to learning are very good.

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

*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.*

NOTE: Year 11 results show comparisons with other secondary modern schools, and Year 13 with all schools nationally.

By Year 9, standards are above average in English, design and technology and in careers education. Attainment is below average in science and in history. It is average and meets expectations in all other subjects. Achievement is satisfactory by Year 9 in history and good in all other subjects. By Year 11, standards are above average in English, mathematics, design and technology, modern foreign languages, work-related learning and in business education. Attainment is below average in history and below the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus in religious education. It is average in all other subjects. Achievement is satisfactory in history and in the examination physical education course. It is very good in the personal, social, health and citizenship education course. Achievement is good in all other subjects.

## **QUALITY OF EDUCATION**

Overall, the quality of education provided by the school is **good**. Teaching and learning are good. Assessment, and the use of assessment information, are satisfactory overall. The curriculum is good overall, as are opportunities for curriculum enrichment. Resources for learning are satisfactory overall. The support, advice and guidance provided for pupils are good. Partnership links with parents, and other links through the community, are good.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

The leadership and management of the school are **good** overall. The governance of the school is **good**. The headteacher provides **very good** leadership and has gained the respect of parents, pupils, students and governors. Senior and middle management staff are helping to make the school's leadership team increasingly effective. Pastoral leadership is very effective. The good governance of the school has significant strengths in its vision, organisation and strategy. However, the school does not fully meet the requirement for a daily act of collective worship.

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

Parents are very positive about the work of the school. They value what the school provides for their children, not only academically and pastorally, but also through the range of enrichment and extra-curricular activities on offer. Almost all the parents answering the pre-inspection survey say their children like the school and it encourages them to become mature and independent. Pupils hold positive views about their school. Almost all like the school. They say they are expected to work hard and to do their best. Pupils feel trusted and agree that the school is run well. It was clear in talking to individuals and groups of pupils that any incidents of bullying or racial abuse are rare and well handled. Of those who made suggestions, most would like to improve the school's cleanliness, facilities and to go on more visits.

## **IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED**

In line with the school's planning, the most important things the school should do to improve are:

- further develop the professional skills of teachers and middle managers in the interpretation and use of assessment data, to ensure consistently sharp targeting for improvement in all subjects;
- further develop the school's work with higher attaining and gifted or talented pupils, not only to raise standards at higher grades in examinations but also to aid sixth form recruitment;
- further develop the school's work in ensuring its approach to the National Literacy Strategy is fully established in all subjects;
- implement the school's planning aimed at broadening the curriculum for sixth form students;
- improve the quality of the sixth form accommodation;

and, to meet statutory requirements:

- take the necessary action, along with other responsible authorities, to resolve any deficiencies in the school's accommodation, particularly drainage systems, affecting the welfare and safety of staff and pupils;
- fully meet the legal requirements for a daily act of collective worship for all pupils and students.

## SIXTH FORM SECTION OF THE SUMMARY REPORT

### OVERALL EVALUATION

Students' attitudes and behaviour are **good**. Teaching and learning in the sixth form are **good**. Standards of attainment are currently **average** and students' achievement is **good**. Attendance and punctuality by students are **satisfactory**. The overall cost-effectiveness of the sixth form is **satisfactory**.

The main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The leadership provided by the head of the sixth form is very good.
- The good achievement of students, from overall well below average standards on entry to the sixth form.
- The sixth form centre and other accommodation are inadequate to support private study.
- Students have insufficient access to ICT facilities outside lesson times.
- Students' attitudes to the school and their learning are good.
- The good planning aimed at broadening the sixth form curriculum, and developing further consortium arrangements, have yet to be fully implemented.
- Opportunities for curriculum enrichment and extra-curricular opportunities for sixth form students are under-developed.
- Good teaching and learning in the sixth form underpin well the students' achievements.
- Students are well prepared for the next stage in their education.
- The school listens well to its students' views and recognises the importance of involving them in the life and work of the school.

### 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: English	<b>Good</b> . Students achieve well as a result of well planned and effective teaching. Consequently, learning is good. Overall, standards in Years 12 and 13 are average.
Mathematics	<b>Satisfactory</b> . Students' standards are below average, but improving. Teaching and learning are satisfactory, as is the students' achievement.
Science: Biology	<b>Good</b> . Standards are average. Good teaching caters for the needs of all students. Effective tracking of students' progress and good use of self-evaluation lead to good learning and satisfactory achievement.
Information and communication technology	<b>Good</b> . Those students who attend regularly benefit well from good, expert teaching. Students achieve well overall and learning is good. Standards of attainment are average.
Humanities: Psychology	<b>Very good</b> . Students achieve well as a result of very good teaching and the quality of support they receive. Standards are average in Year 12 and above average in Year 13. Learning is very good overall.



Business education            **Good.** Teaching and learning are good. Achievement is good overall. Students on AVCE courses achieve very well because of opportunities to discuss work individually with teachers. Standards are average.

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*The curriculum areas are broadly common across all post-16 education and training. They do not necessarily correspond with subjects and courses taught by the school. Inspectors make judgements in the range: excellent; very good; good; satisfactory; unsatisfactory; poor; very poor. Excellent and very good are equivalent to the judgement 'outstanding' in further education and sixth form college reports; poor and very poor are equivalent to 'very weak'.*

### **ADVICE, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT**

The school takes **good** care for the welfare and health and safety of its students. The school's provision of support, advice and guidance for students is **good**. Steps taken to involve students in school life are **very good**. However, the support the school provides to help develop social relationships and private study facilities, is adversely affected by the poor condition of the sixth form study centre. Nevertheless, working relationships between staff and students are good and, together with good, diagnostic assessment in the sixth form, are supporting students well.

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

A new head of sixth form, appointed earlier in the year, provides **very good** leadership. Since taking up the post, there has been an effective review and evaluation of priorities for the development of the sixth form. This includes the introduction of more vocational courses and general studies and a wider emphasis on thinking skills. Overall, there is a very good rapport between the head of sixth form, the staff and the students. Because of this, the majority of students show good attitudes towards their sixth form studies and staff are willing to give additionally of their time to the students.

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

Students enjoy life in the sixth form. They consider that teaching is challenging and demanding. Most pupils say their teachers are accessible and helpful. However, in the student questionnaire, a third of them expressed the feeling there was no adult in school who knew them well. This is not only a reflection of recent staff changes but also of the fact that, in the immediate past, there have been students whose attendance has been poor and who have not demonstrated a strong enough commitment to their studies. Because of the good rapport now existing between staff and students, this is no longer an issue. Nevertheless, inspectors find the development of a sixth form ethos and social working relationships are significantly hampered by the lack of a decent sixth form common room.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS**

### **STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS**

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

Achievement<sup>1</sup> is **good**, in Years 7 to 11 and in the sixth form. Standards<sup>2</sup> in work and lessons seen by Years 9, 11 and 13 are **average** overall, when compared with expectations for all schools nationally.

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

- Because pupils are enabled to achieve well, standards by Year 11 in examinations are well above average compared with other secondary modern schools.
- Overall, pupils and students make good progress as they move through the school.
- Standards in national examinations in the sixth form are low compared with national averages.
- Sixth form students are enabled to achieve well compared with their standards in Year 11.
- The school's programme to extend further the achievement of its gifted or talented pupils is at an early stage of development.

#### **Commentary**

1. Holmer Green Senior School is a good and effective school. It is a secondary modern school, within a selective system. Consequently, the attainment of pupils on entry in Year 7 is below average, and well below average in the sixth form. A quarter of the pupils and students attending the school come from recognised areas of social deprivation. Because of the school's successful emphasis on raising pupils' and students' self-value and self-esteem, it enables the majority to achieve well. Pupils and students make good progress overall because good teaching supports their learning well. Compared with all other secondary modern schools nationally, pupils' attainment in tests and examinations is well above average by Years 9 and 11, and above average for all schools nationally. This is because the school sets itself suitably ambitious targets for success in national tests and public examinations. Targets are challenging and well founded as a result of the school's sound and practical use of assessment information in support of pupils' learning. Because of good self-evaluation, and improving use of performance data, it is a school which is focused well on improving standards.
2. Standards in literacy, and pupils' competency in mathematics and information and communication technology (ICT), are average by Years 9 and 11, and in the sixth form. The achievement of pupils and students with a special educational need is good overall. Those whose mother tongue is not English, or who are at an early stage of English language development, achieve well. Pupils and students who have been identified as gifted, talented or gifted and talented, achieve satisfactorily.
3. At the time of the inspection, no national data was available to compare the school's performance with other schools for the teacher assessments, tests and public examinations held in 2004. National comparisons are therefore made with 2003, the latest year for which such information is available. However, some national data became available relating to the Year 9 mathematics and science tests for 2004 and, where possible, this has been referred to in the subject sections.

#### **Key Stage 3 (Pupils in Years 7 to 9)**

4. By Year 9, there is no significant difference between the achievement of girls and boys. Over the three years from 2001 to 2003, the standards attained in the core<sup>3</sup> subjects were average

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<sup>1</sup> Achievement refers to the progress pupils make in terms of where they started when they entered the school. Thus, good achievement does not necessarily mean that standards are above average, but that pupils do well and make better than expected progress.

<sup>2</sup> Attainment refers to the standards pupils achieve compared with national averages.

overall for both girls and boys. However, the performance of pupils in English was above that expected for their age group. Overall, since the previous inspection, the school's rate of improvement has been above the national trend.

- Standards of attainment in the 2003 national tests were well above average in Year 9 when compared with other secondary modern schools nationally. Attainment was well above average in English and mathematics for pupils gaining the expected Level 5<sup>4</sup> or higher Level 6 and above. Standards were above average at these levels in science. Compared with all schools nationally, attainment was above average overall with well above average standards in English, above average attainment in mathematics and average standards in science. Compared with the standards the pupils achieved at the end of Year 6, progress was good overall.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	35.7 (36.1)	33.4 (33.3)
Mathematics	36.3 (33.7)	35.4 (34.7)
Science	33.2 (33.2)	33.6 (33.3)

*There were 178 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year*

- In pupils' work and lessons seen during the inspection, standards are above average by Year 9 in English, design and technology, and in careers education. Attainment is average in mathematics, ICT, art, geography, modern languages, music, physical education, and in the school's personal, social, health and citizenship education course. Standards are in line with the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus in religious education. Attainment is below average in science, and in history. Achievement is good in English, mathematics, science, ICT, art, design and technology, geography, modern languages, music, physical education, religious education, careers education, and in the personal, social, health and citizenship education course. It is satisfactory in history.

### **Key Stage 4 (Pupils in Years 10 and 11)**

- In 2003, there was a difference between the performance of boys and girls in GCSE examinations. This was because, boys' results were above average, and those for girls average. The school's trend for improvement in standards since the previous inspection has been above that seen nationally. In the three years from 2001 to 2003, both boys' and girls' results by Year 11 were average, compared with all schools nationally. The progress made between Years 9 and 11 for those pupils gaining 5 or more passes at A\* to C or A\* to G was good. It was very good for pupils gaining 1 or more A\* to G passes.
- In pupils' work and lessons seen during the inspection, standards are above average by Year 11 in English, mathematics, design and technology, modern languages, work-related learning, and in business education. Attainment is average in science, ICT, art, geography, music, physical education, and in the personal, social, health and citizenship education course. Standards are below average in history. Attainment is below the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus in religious education. Achievement is very good in the personal, social, health and citizenship education course. It is good in English, mathematics, science, ICT, art, design and technology, geography, modern languages, music, core physical

<sup>3</sup> The National Curriculum core subjects are English, mathematics and science. The foundation subjects are: art; design and technology; geography; history; ICT; modern languages; music and physical education. In addition, religious education is taught to the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus.

<sup>4</sup> The National Curriculum has been written on the basis that pupils, by the end of Year 9, are expected to reach Level 5. If a pupil is attaining Level 6 or 7 then he or she is reaching standards above that expected for a pupil of his or her age.

education, religious education, work-related learning, and in business education. It is satisfactory in history, and in the examination physical education course.

### **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	59 (53)	52 (50)
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	94 (98)	91 (91)
Percentage of pupils gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	99 (97)	96 (96)
Average point score per pupil (best eight subjects)	37.1 (34.8)	34.7 (34.8)

*There were 144 pupils in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.*

9. GCSE results overall in 2003 were the best ever for the school. They were above average when compared with all schools nationally. When compared with all other secondary modern schools, results were well above average, and in the highest 5 per cent nationally for pupils gaining 5 or more A\* to G passes. However, although the proportion of pupils gaining higher A\* and A passes was below average for all schools, it was above average for secondary modern schools. The school enables its higher attaining pupils to achieve well and make good progress. However, the school is a victim of its own success. This is because most of its higher attaining Year 11 pupils are then accepted to take up sixth form studies at local grammar schools or colleges, where accommodation and facilities are better than in the school's own sixth form.

#### **Sixth form (Students in Years 12 and 13)**

10. In national terms, the attainment of students on entry into the sixth form is well below average. In the recent past, the school has had an open policy of accepting students into its sixth form, and entry requirements have been lower than for most other schools. This has been good for students who would not otherwise have been able to enter sixth forms and take A-level courses. Furthermore, on average, just under a third of sixth form students come from local areas of high social deprivation. The school's approach to the overall personal development of its students has ensured they achieve well in their post-16 studies. School records show that a high proportion of Year 13 students attain well enough to enable them to go on to university, and they receive a good range of offers for their chosen courses.
11. Standards in AS and A2 examinations were below average in 2003 for both male and female students, with a similar trend for the past three years. However, the school's careful analysis shows that some of the lowest performing students came from other partner schools and the depressed performance of a few others can be tracked to personal, social or medical difficulties. Nevertheless, in spite of below average standards, the majority of students perform at least as well as predicted on the basis of their GCSE results in Year 11, and just over half attain better than their predicted grades. This is due not only to good teaching and learning, but also to good working relationships, and the general support provided by staff for their students.

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

	School results	National results
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Percentage entries gaining A-E grades	75.5 (90.5)	89.4 (92.6)
Percentage entries gaining A-B grades	4.9 (17.3)	32.6 (35.3)
Average point score per pupil	155.1 (160.7)	258.2 (263.3)

*There were 41 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.*

12. In the six subjects inspected in depth during the inspection, students' attainment is average in English, biology, ICT, psychology, and in business education. Standards are below average in mathematics. Achievement is good in English, ICT, psychology, and in business education. It is satisfactory in mathematics and in biology.

### **Pupils and students with a special educational need**

13. Pupils with learning difficulties, including those who are visually impaired or who have speech and language difficulties, make good progress with their learning. This is because of the good level of support the school provides. Overall, their achievement is good when compared with the ability of the pupils and the improvement they have made since their entry to the school in Year 7. Pupils who are learning English as an additional language achieve well, and make good progress, with good learning support aid. Overall, the achievement of gifted or talented pupils is satisfactory. This because, although such pupils have been identified, a whole school co-ordinated approach has yet to be developed. Consequently, the school is only providing limited enrichment and enhancement activities for its gifted, talented, and gifted or talented pupils and students.

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

Pupils and students' behaviour is **good** throughout the school. Pupils' attitudes are **very good** and students' attitudes are **good**. Pupils' and students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is **good** overall. Attendance is **satisfactory** in the sixth form and **good** in the main school. Punctuality is **satisfactory** across all year groups.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Behaviour is very good and pupils and students relate well to one another and in lessons.
- Pupils' social and moral development is very good.
- Pupils have very positive attitudes to most aspects of school life.
- A very good feature of the school is the willingness of pupils and students to take on a wide range of responsibilities.
- Recruitment of Year 11 pupils into the sixth form is adversely affected by the unsatisfactory sixth form accommodation.

### **Commentary: main school**

14. Pupils actively engage in lessons and working relationships amongst pupils and between pupils and their teachers and other adults are very good. Some individuals on occasion show less positive behaviour and attitudes. However, the support structures within the school ensure that these pupils' needs are recognised and do not interfere with other pupils' learning. Pupils are respectful and helpful to staff, their peers and visitors to the school. Outside the classroom, the pupils show courtesy as they move around the school. The way in which the school, the timetable and breaks are planned has minimised any problems which could occur and, as a result, the atmosphere is well-ordered. In almost all lessons, pupils are keen to learn. Pupils' very good social development has been significantly encouraged by the growing numbers of pupils involved in roles such as prefects, elected school counsellors and peer mentors.
15. Senior management have high expectations for moral development and pupils respond accordingly. Consequently, their moral development is very good. There is a well-understood

code of respect which is consistently implemented in lessons and around the school. The result is a good and unforced atmosphere in which pupils are considerate to each other, to staff and to visitors. Staff have introduced a whole-school programme of 'thoughts for the day' which are the subject of class and year group assemblies. They reinforce moral and spiritual concepts well. This is a pleasant school in which to be. Staff provide very good role models and deal with problems in a constructive and positive way which makes sense to the pupils. Opportunities are seized well to explore issues in lessons. For example, small groups of Year 9 pupils made plays about verbal bullying and peer pressure in a drama lesson.

16. Pupils' cultural and multicultural development is good. There is racial harmony, which is supported by the curriculum and by the respect shown for all groups within the school. During Ramadan, prayer rooms were set aside for those who wished and pupils confirm that working relationships are very good. Cultural activities associated with creative studies enable pupils to extend well their horizons and these include occasional visits and visitors such as theatre groups and writers. This is an improvement on the findings reported in the previous inspection.
17. Although there is a whole-school policy for spiritual, social, moral and cultural aspects, there is little overt planning of these elements in schemes of work. Nevertheless, an informal approach to these elements is well established in teachers' thinking, which encourages well learning about ethical issues and awareness of spiritual depths. For example, useful discussion about the impact of peer pressure arose during a drama lesson in Year 9. The personal, social, health and citizenship education course provides pupils with time in which social and moral questions are explored well. Year group assemblies allow pupils to share in collective reflection, but this is not always the case in tutor groups where the 'thought for the day' is used. Despite not fully meeting the requirements for a daily act of collective worship, there has been good improvement since the previous inspection. Pupils' high level of moral and social awareness is obvious in their behaviour, courtesy and understanding of each other. In lessons there are often good opportunities to help pupils enjoy deeper spiritual experiences. For example, the beauty of mathematical shapes was celebrated in a mathematics lesson. In a design task there was an emphasis on recognising how other peoples' views and tastes can be appreciated and these successfully promote pupils' good spiritual development.

***Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%) 2003-2004***

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data:	6.8	School data:	0.8
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.*

18. Attendance is good and has improved since the previous inspection when it was satisfactory. Pupils' attendance is above average. The rate of unauthorised absence has fallen over the last two years and is now below average. These improvements are the result of the school's effective systems for promoting and monitoring attendance. A good network of support for pupils who have poor attendance deals effectively with the underlying problems. Punctuality to school and to lessons is satisfactory, in spite of the disparate nature of the buildings causing difficulties of movement around the site. The rate of exclusions for fixed periods in the last school year was relatively high but there were no permanent exclusions. This lack of permanent exclusions and the recent drop in the number of fixed exclusions reflect the well thought-out and effective and consistently applied strategies used in the school to support good behaviour.

## 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	632	39	0
Asian or Asian British – Indian	5	1	0
Any other ethnic group	3	1	0
Parent / pupil preferred not to say	188	19	0

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

### **Pupils and students with a special educational need**

19. Pupils and students with learning difficulties behave well and they are well integrated into classes. The school is part of an initiative, which started last term, to change the perceptions and attitudes of pupils and students from socially deprived backgrounds. This is a very good programme, which targets potentially able pupils and students who are underachieving. A specialist mentor works very well with these pupils and students to raise their self-esteem and aspirations. There are good links with a range of agencies so pupils and students with personal problems have good access to help. This initiative is providing very good support for these pupils and students and early indications are that it is having some significant success.

### **Commentary: sixth form**

20. The development of students' attitudes is good. Many in the sixth form have joined the school from elsewhere. The majority of students relate well to their teachers and this helps to create a positive ethos for teaching and learning. However, a third of them feel there is no adult in school who knows them well. This is not only a reflection of recent staff changes but also of the fact that, in the recent past, there are students whose attendance has been poor and who have not demonstrated strong commitment to their studies. Overall, attendance in the sixth form is satisfactory. The school is aware of weaknesses in its systems for entering attendance data and has put additional support in place to resolve this.
21. Most students' successful working relationships with teachers are built on trust and mutual respect and this contributes in great measure to the schools culture for teaching and learning. Students conduct themselves maturely and sensibly and present good role models to others younger than themselves. However, as yet, they play a rather limited part in the wider aspects of school life. Nevertheless, the school encourages initiative and some students have helped to start clubs. In discussion with the sixth form committee, students shared some good ideas as to how their role could be extended and how they were working with the new head of sixth form on initiatives for the current year.

22. The lack of suitable accommodation has impeded the independent learning, group study and enrichment activities of students in the sixth form and has had an impact on Year 11 pupils' judgements when considering where to take up their sixth form studies. Consequently, many of the higher attaining pupils in Year 11 have opted to continue their studies elsewhere. This has an effect on the ethos on the sixth form and in part reflects the lack of facilities and consortium arrangements with other course providers.

## **QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL**

Overall, the quality of education provided by the school is **good**. Teaching and learning are good throughout Years 7 to 13. The curriculum is good in the main school and satisfactory in the sixth form. Opportunities for curriculum enrichment are good overall. Resources for learning are satisfactory, but accommodation for the sixth form is unsatisfactory overall. The support, advice and guidance provided for pupils and students are good. Partnership links with parents and other links through the community are good.

### **Teaching and learning**

Teaching is **good** and learning is **good** overall throughout Years 7 to 11 and in the sixth form. The quality of assessment is **satisfactory** overall. It is **satisfactory** in the main school and is **good** in the sixth form.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Teachers have a good specialist knowledge and understanding of their subjects.
- Teachers have high expectations of pupils and students and this raises interest in learning.
- Good levels of challenge raise pupils' and students' expectations and support achievement.
- Good planning by teachers underpins well pupils' and students' learning.
- Good data is provided to enable the tracking of pupils' progress and for target setting.
- The use and application of data and assessment information are inconsistent across subjects.
- Whole-school target days provide a good focus for important reviews.
- Not all teaching supports pupils' learning well enough in science by Years 9 and 11.

### **Commentary: main school**

23. It is significant that, when you walk around the school, teachers and other staff help to engender a sense of calm and purposeful activity in all classrooms. This illustrates well the school's approach to supporting pupils' learning and helps explain why the greater majority of pupils are achieving well. The pupils and students know their teachers have something good to offer them.
24. In Years 7 to 9 teaching and learning are good in English, mathematics, science, ICT, art, design and technology, geography, modern foreign languages, music, physical education, religious education, careers education and in the school's personal, social, health and citizenship education course. They are satisfactory in history.
25. In Years 10 and 11, teaching and learning are very good in the school's personal, social, health and citizenship education course. They are good in English, mathematics, science, ICT, art, design and technology, geography, modern foreign languages, music, core course physical education, religious education, work-related learning and in business education. Teaching and learning are satisfactory in history and in examination course physical education.

### ***Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 110 lessons***



Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
5 (4%)	37 (34%)	51 (46%)	15 (14%)	1 (1%)	1 (1%)	0 (0%)

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

26. Teaching and learning were good in half the lessons seen and very good or excellent in some two-fifths. Examples of excellent teaching and learning were seen in mathematics, drama and in the school's personal, social, health and citizenship education course. However, although some excellent teaching was also seen in science, one unsatisfactory and one poor lesson were seen in the subject. In the unsatisfactory lesson, the teacher failed to actively involve the pupils, either through questions or discussion. Consequently, the pupils were inadequately challenged. In the lesson where poor learning took place, the lack of active engagement of the pupils led to a subtle disruption of the lesson by bored pupils. Overall, teachers across all subjects use homework satisfactorily to reinforce pupils' learning. However, not all teachers use homework regularly or consistently enough to extend pupils' learning.
27. In the best lessons there are some key strengths which reflect the overall good practice within the school. Principally, teachers show a good understanding of their subjects and the pupils are responsive to this. Teachers and support staff have good expectations of the pupils. Consequently, pupils are challenged and encouraged well and become involved well in their learning. As a result, the pupils' acquisition of skills, knowledge and understanding is good by Years 9 and 11. Teachers share effectively with the pupils what it is they are expected to learn and how they can improve because lessons are planned well. Because of this good planning, the pace of lessons is good and pupils show good levels of self-motivation.
28. Teachers' marking is frequent and consistent and in most cases pupils are aware of what they need to do to improve their performance. Departments receive current data to enable them to track pupils' progress and set suitably challenging targets. An assessment working party meets regularly and is a good forum for sharing good practice. Humanities and business, for example, are more advanced in developing how data is used and applied. In design and technology, pupils are assessed on entry into Year 7 for the purposes of grouping and their progress is constantly monitored under a very well-constructed system. However, this is not a consistent pattern across departments, where in some cases data is not sufficiently used to track progress and identify underachievement. There are good examples of pupils commenting on each other's work in class, yet there is sometimes a lack of questioning in lessons. Some comments on work are not linked to standards and improvement and there are instances of pupils not knowing their level of attainment. In the absence of a model, assessment in citizenship is currently unsatisfactory. However, target days, where pupils discuss their progress with their tutors, have been very effective, with a high proportion of parents attending.

### **Pupils and students with a special educational need**

29. Pupils are assessed well on entry to the school in Year 7 for reading, comprehension and mathematics. Data from primary school assessments is used effectively to ensure learning support is provided at the best level. As pupils progress through the school they continue to be assessed regularly and effectively in order to ensure work is set at the correct level.
30. Visually impaired pupils are catered for well with teaching and learning material produced in large print. Pupils in the speech and language unit benefit very well from very good teaching in purpose-built classrooms. The specialist teachers also support pupils very well in the different subjects and provide very good advice and guidance for teachers. Consequently,

pupils make good progress with their learning. However, not all subjects across the school cater effectively for the learning needs of the gifted or talented.

31. Overall, the school provides pupils with special educational needs with very good support during lessons. In addition, pupils are withdrawn from a few lessons for close work which deals effectively with any difficulties individuals may have. This sensible mixture of approaches means there is as little disruption to lessons as possible and makes sure there is continuity in both teaching and learning for pupils with special educational needs. In addition, the school makes sure that pupils with learning difficulties have good access to ICT and learning resources.

### **Commentary: sixth form**

32. Of the six sixth form subjects inspected in depth, teaching and learning are very good in psychology. They are good in English, biology, ICT and business education. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall in mathematics.
33. The teaching of sixth form lessons is planned well, focused well and offers the students a variety of challenges. Some teaching, whilst satisfactory overall, can involve too much teacher talk and, consequently, some opportunities are missed to involve fully the students. Some lower attaining students are very reliant on their teachers to help support their learning. However, teachers do explain key concepts and ideas well to help deepen the students' understanding. The skilful use of questioning was seen in English. A very good use of resources to support learning was seen in biology. The use of interactive whiteboards was effective in ICT to maintain the pace of lessons and develop well students' understanding. In business education, good linkage of work to practical examples extended well the students' previous knowledge. The very best sixth form teaching inspires students and stimulates real curiosity in learning. Good examples of such methods were seen in a mathematics lesson, and in psychology.
34. Assessment in the sixth form is good. Of particular note is the promotion of personal skills and the individual support and guidance offered in the advanced vocational business course. Overall, marking is more diagnostic than in the main school and feedback on improving performance is full and constructive. Most predictions are accurate, but there are a few instances of insecure target setting and insufficient promotion of independent learning skills.

### **The curriculum**

The curriculum is **good** in the main school and there is a **good** range of opportunities for enrichment. Resources for learning are **satisfactory** overall. The sixth form curriculum is **satisfactory** and there is a **satisfactory** range of opportunities for enrichment. Sixth form accommodation is **unsatisfactory** overall.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Sixth form accommodation and facilities for private study are unsatisfactory.
- Current curriculum experiences in the sixth form are narrow.
- There is excellent provision and support for pupils with speech or language difficulties.
- There is very good provision for pupils following the alternative curriculum programme in Years 10 and 11.
- Numerous activities for all age groups enhance pupils' learning and development as mature and well-balanced individuals.
- There is a good programme for pupils' personal development, but teaching time is limited.
- Provision for pupils and students with special educational needs is very good.
- The distribution of lesson time for some subjects is unsatisfactory.
- Good careers guidance prepares students well for higher education and employment.

## **Commentary: main school**

35. The curriculum meets the needs of the pupils well. There is a broad range of worthwhile curricular opportunities, which caters for the interests, aptitudes and particular needs of all pupils. Since the previous inspection, the school has made good progress with developing the curriculum. The timetable has been restructured and there are improved time allocations for subjects in Years 7 to 9. However, due to constraints imposed by part-time staff and links with colleges and other schools the distribution of lessons across the two-week timetable is unsatisfactory in mathematics, physical education and in the personal, social, health and citizenship education course. Furthermore, although there is a good programme for personal, social, health and citizenship education, the quality of provision is compromised by a lack of teaching time in Years 7 and 8. The range of GCSE and vocational courses has been extended and pupils have greater flexibility with the number of subjects they choose. The management of the curriculum is good. It is kept under regular review and good progress has been made with implementing new teaching and learning styles.
36. In Years 10 and 11 there is very good course for some pupils who experience difficulty with the traditional GCSE programme. Some 20 pupils spend half-a-day a week at a local centre following a course in motor vehicle and road studies organized through the local college. This is a very good programme which leads to a formal entry-level qualification accredited through an examining body. The programme also contributes well to the pupils' personal development, who are displaying very good attitudes to learning and their attendance is good. Overall, there is good provision for careers and work-related learning.
37. All subject areas contribute well to a variety of relevant activities, which help to develop pupils' interest in the curriculum offered by the school. The activities include trips, visiting speakers, booster lessons and industry-linked opportunities. Music and sport are both well represented. There is a satisfactory, but as yet limited, range of instrumental classes. However, extra-curricular activities culminate in numerous concerts during the year. The sporting provision is very good because the programme is strong, varied and well supported across the year groups.
38. Overall, the school's resources for learning meet satisfactorily the needs of the curriculum. Although the school has experienced difficulties in staffing in the recent past, teachers are well qualified and take full advantage of opportunities for further professional development. Other resources are satisfactory overall, but are used well by staff to support and extend pupils' learning. The library contributes well to the support of pupils' independent learning. However, the availability of ICT resources is a weakness in some departments. Overall, the main school accommodation satisfactorily meets the needs of the National Curriculum. Nevertheless, as at the time of the previous inspection, there remain issues for the school as to the quality of some of its facilities.

## **Pupils and students with a special educational need**

39. Curriculum provision for pupils on the register of special educational need is very good. There is a very good focus on support in the classroom with limited withdrawal sessions to deal with individual learning difficulties. This approach ensures pupils are enabled to take a full part in the mainstream curriculum. However, curriculum enrichment and enhancement opportunities for pupils and students who may be gifted or talented are under-developed.
40. The speech and language unit is an excellent facility for the school, which is staffed by a team of language specialists. They provide a high quality of teaching and learning support for pupils through withdrawal from lessons. They also provide learning support in subjects. In addition, they go beyond their remit by using this opportunity to assess the teaching and learning styles of teachers. This is leading to the good modification of classroom practice. Furthermore, in order to understand fully the problems pupils have with speech and language, there is an innovative approach already planned for a whole school training session. This is

designed very well to place classroom teachers in a simulated and challenging situation where communication will be difficult for them.

### **Commentary: sixth form**

41. The school provides a satisfactory range of sixth form courses, which meet the needs and interests of most students. However, there are no courses in the expressive arts or general studies. The school is opting not to provide a key skills course during the current year. However, discussions with the head of sixth form show this is in the school's planning for potential introduction, along with a general studies course, in September 2005. Nevertheless, some vocational courses are on offer to students in the sixth form and the school is considering well how it can increase the number and variety of these courses. Consortium arrangements with other schools offer the potential for a wider choice of subjects, but uptake is minimal. The new leadership of the sixth form is very good and is planning, and developing, a more balanced and relevant programme for students.
42. A satisfactory range of enrichment and extra-curricular activities is available for sixth form students. Involvement in clubs and sporting activities is limited but some students help with organizing and supporting events for pupils across Years 7 to 11. This makes a strong contribution to students' personal development and helps enhance the positive ethos, which exists throughout the school. There is a good community service initiative, which involves all sixth form students with placements in local schools and residential homes for the elderly. This makes a good contribution to students' personal and social development. An effective Young Enterprise programme enables students to develop effectively skills and experience in the world of work.
43. Students benefit well from good guidance towards entry to higher education or employment. This is provided through a good partnership between the sixth form tutors, the Aim Higher mentor and the local Connexions adviser. An annual conference for students supports them well with information on courses and employment and provides them with good advice and guidance on life skills and financial matters.
44. Resources in the sixth form are unsatisfactory because the accommodation for students is currently unsatisfactory. This is because of the poor condition of the sixth form study centre. Consequently, the facilities for independent study are unsatisfactory. Following the inspection, the local authority has provided the school with plans for new buildings, which will enable the school to significantly improve the quality of accommodation for its sixth form students within the next two years. Overall, the match of teachers to support the curriculum is good and other resources and teaching accommodation are satisfactory.

### **Care, guidance and support**

The school takes **good** care for the welfare and health and safety of its pupils and students. However, the level of welfare is adversely affected by health and safety problems associated with the site's drainage. The school's provision of support, advice and guidance for pupils and students is **good**. Steps taken to involve pupils and students in school life are **very good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Arrangements to care for pupils' and students' pastoral and academic interests are very well structured.
- Procedures to monitor pupils' and students' health and welfare are rigorous and comprehensive.
- The school is doing all it can to secure improvements in health and safety, which are compromised by drainage problems on the site.
- Peer mentoring and the school council make a very good contribution to the welfare of pupils and students and their participation in school life.

## **Commentary: main school**

45. Pupils' academic work and personal development are considered to be equally important in the school and hence both are given equally good attention. A well-structured system to monitor progress and development involves all form tutors, department and year heads.
46. Regular discussion, coupled with good record-keeping, means each pupil's development and needs are known. As a result, all pupils are given very good support and guidance. Those with particular needs are identified and the pastoral team's support for them is very effective, so all pupils are given every chance to learn and mature well. The school keeps detailed records of pupils' personal development and has a carefully structured way of dealing with behavioural problems. This is achieved through a system of graded detentions, coupled with an effective support room to which pupils, who need to spend personal time, may go. Despite the large numbers of new staff the school has ensured that all staff have had training in assertive discipline techniques. Most pupils say they are kept well informed as to how they might improve their learning. Twice a year they have a discussion about targets with their tutors, to which their parents are invited. Targets are kept up to date in their planning diaries.
47. New pupils are supported well by trained Year 10 pupil mentors and these pastoral relationships often continue for a subsequent year. As a result, pupils feel very well cared for. The majority of pupils in the main school, answering the pre-inspection questionnaire, confirm they have adults to whom they can turn if they have problems. They remember their first impressions of the school with pleasure. They also said they like their teachers. They appreciate the information they receive about how well they are doing in subjects and what they need to do to progress. This helps them feel secure and in control of their own learning.
48. The school and year councils function effectively and are regarded well by pupils across the age range. The school council is a valuable aid to both teachers and pupils in the sharing of ideas and views. It encourages a strong sense of self-worth among pupils and enables staff to have a clear idea of matters concerning pupils. The success of the school council in identifying and communicating its concerns is illustrated well in the improved toilet facilities. The school has employed commercial consultants to survey pupils' views. The impact, which the council and survey are having in the school, is good evidence that pupils' views are sought and acted upon.
49. Child-protection and first aid procedures meet requirements and staff have been properly trained. The school responds quickly to the needs of individual pupils. The school's pastoral secretary is well qualified to deal with pupils' medical needs. The school is prepared to respond quickly and effectively to any emergencies.
50. During the inspection, a significant health and safety issue was brought to the attention of the school, the governing body and the local authority. This relates to the serious drainage problems the school experiences on its site, which often results in flooding. Following a meeting at the school during inspection week, a satisfactory plan of action has been drawn up, involving the school and local authority, to undertake immediate remedial work to explore and resolve the issue. There is an agreed timescale for any major engineering works to be carried out in association with the building of new classroom facilities in 18 months time. Following the inspection, plans for this new work have been provided to the school by the local authority.
51. The school's own procedures to ensure pupils and students work in a safe environment are very good overall. Professional checks on equipment are undertaken, although the check on portable electrical equipment has yet to be fully completed. Governors and staff undertake regular formal risk assessments and audits of the school, grounds and visits so that all issues are identified and dealt with well in compliance with health and safety regulations. The staff do their best to help pupils manage in the difficult traffic outside the school gates.

## **Pupils and students with a special educational need**

52. There is good support, welfare and guidance for pupils with special educational needs. Regular team meetings between the learning support staff and a learning support group consisting of representatives from each subject discuss issues, share information and review strategies used in the classroom. This ensures the close monitoring and care of pupils with a special educational need. The format of individual educational plans has been reviewed and improved well since the previous inspection. The plans provide concise details of the pupil's learning difficulty, together with classroom strategies for use by teachers and learning support assistants.
53. The provision is satisfactory for the one pupil who is a traveller. However, the school does not have a formalised policy for traveller children. There is an informal system in place to cater for pupils when they are registered with the school. When a pupil is away, the head of year concerned liaises with the authority agency for dealing with traveller children. The authority agency works very well with the school and the parents to ensure continuity in education through providing distance-learning packs.

#### **Commentary: sixth form**

54. The provision of support, advice and guidance for sixth-form students is good. The school values students' views and responds to them very well. A key element of the good leadership of the sixth form is that students say they are valued as individuals. A third of those responding to the pre-inspection survey said they did not receive helpful advice. However, the inspection finds the guidance provided for students relating to pastoral or academic matters is good. The great majority of students said they are following suitable courses. Regular one-to-one meetings with their tutors provide a good quality mentoring programme which does much to support students to take responsibility for managing their own learning.
55. The school has limited formal systems of support for sixth formers. It has run an induction day for Year 12 pupils, but not for Year 13. There has been provision for study skill teaching and courses on stress and financial management. However, although there are satisfactory, but limited, opportunities for extra-curricular activities within the sixth form, there are few enrichment courses. The lack of good common room facilities for private study or group work means students do not have the opportunity to develop necessary group and individual organisational and research skills. They often find themselves trying to concentrate on private or group work in the very busy common areas of the main school. Students value the community work they are encouraged to do and some act as learning assistants in classrooms for the younger pupils. This helps well their personal development as do subjects such as psychology, which are often linked to their own experience of life. Students recognise that their studies have a significant influence on their understanding of themselves and others.

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

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

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

- The school regularly seeks and acts well upon the views of parents and they are supportive of the school's work.
- Pupils' and students' annual and interim progress reports, and the school's website, provide parents with good information.
- The school has developed a good network of links with the wider community.
- There are currently limited sixth form links with other schools and colleges.

#### **Commentary: main school**

56. Links with parents are good. Parents hold the school in high regard and actively support it in a variety of ways. Parental support includes the active parents' association, which raises sums of money for the school each year and helps to build well the community through the events it organises. Attendance at all parents' consultation evenings and at specialist events is good. Parents consult heads of year if they have any concerns and the school makes good use of parent surveys. This results in good identification of parents' views and enables the school to act on these. For example, the school has responded well to parents by reducing class sizes where possible. There are informative meetings for the exchange of advice for parents of pupils who have to decide on GCSE options. Consultation with parents at parents' evenings and through the termly parent partnership meetings gives the school a good insight into parental satisfaction with its work. The great majority of parents say they feel comfortable about bringing any concerns they may have to the school.
57. In response to the pre-inspection questionnaire, most parents agreed that their children like the school, are not harassed and are encouraged to mature well. Most feel well informed about their children's progress. Inspectors agree with the parents' views. In addition, annual reports on pupils' progress provide parents and pupils with good, detailed, clear and specific guidance on the steps pupils need to take in order to improve their learning. Interim reports give useful indications as to their children's attainment and level of effort. Parents receive good newsletters and sports updates, which are accessible and friendly. Pupils' personal planners are used well, regularly checked by form tutors and in the case of younger pupils, signed by parents. They provide a valuable means of communication between teachers and parents.
58. The school attracts pupils from a number of primary schools. It is oversubscribed. Most prospective pupils have met their tutors during an induction day and the school has a great deal of information about the pupils when they first arrive. This helps well to ensure a smooth transition and induction into the school and guides effectively the school's decisions about the structure of tutor groups. As a result, pupils settle in very easily. Overall, community links are good and include enterprise days, which involve the education business partnership, a technology day and competition.

### **Pupils and students with a special educational need**

59. Regular visits are made to primary schools by the special educational needs co-ordinator to see pupils in Year 6 with learning difficulties and to assess their learning needs and attend review meetings. Reviews of Statements of Special Educational Need are undertaken well. These actively involve parents, school staff and the appropriate agencies, in order to ensure the pupils' needs are fully assessed and catered for. The authority has set up a very supportive 'Parents' Partnership', which meets on a regular basis for parents from schools in the area.

### **Commentary: sixth form**

60. The school has few links with other sixth forms and colleges in the area. This means students are limited in the range of options they may take by shared provision with other institutions. This restricts the range of courses on offer and the numbers who stay on into the sixth form. Nevertheless, there have been good industry links through the business partnership. For example, Year 13 students are writing a computer program for a local company. The school recognises it needs to develop further in this respect. Information provided for parents of sixth form students is good. They are invited to an information day when their sons and daughters enter the sixth form. Many who were not able to attend were written to and have further good opportunities to come to parents' evenings and to keep track of their sons' and daughters' progress through half-termly reports.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

The leadership of the school is **good** overall. The work of the governors is **good**. Management of the school is also **good**. The headteacher and head of sixth form provide **very good** leadership.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The very good leadership of the headteacher and head of sixth form springs from a clear vision for the school and their perceptive identification of priorities for improvement.
- Teamwork is strong within departments and new staff are very well supported.
- The overall management of the school is well co-ordinated.
- The governing body is well organised and is well aware of the school's strengths and weaknesses.
- One statutory requirement is not met, as a daily collective worship for all pupils and students is not currently provided.

### **Commentary: main school**

61. The headteacher has been appointed since the previous inspection. He is building very well on the good leadership noted at that time and has had a very good impact on the school with the enthusiastic support of senior management. He has also gained the respect of parents, pupils, students and governors, who recognise and appreciate his initiatives. Good progress has been achieved through changes in senior management staffing, so there is now an additional member of the team and all have clear responsibilities. Additional senior staff have helped to make the management team increasingly effective, although some areas are still developing. Parents, pupils and students say the school is well led.
62. The good governance of the school has significant strengths in its vision, organisation and strategy. The governing body operates effectively, setting a good vision for raising standards with an inclusive concern for individuals within the school. Governors are in a good position to challenge the school and the senior leadership team. This is because they understand the need to look closely at statistics and to ask for analyses of the progress of different groups of pupils. Consequently, they are well organised and informed. They monitor performance management very well. Their monitoring of classroom practice is less formal. Statutory requirements are met well, except that for a daily act of collective worship for all pupils and students. However, there is now a school-wide system of a thought for the day, reflected in the content of assemblies and many, but not all, tutor groups.
63. Pastoral leadership is very effective and this is apparent in the improved level of support for pupils with behavioural difficulties and the growing importance of areas of responsibility given to pupils. The pastoral team has a good effect on the school and contributes well to the good ethos, for example through a more formal system of rewards, assembly routines, emphases on correct school uniform and the good development of the prefect system. Prefects have made a considerable contribution to school life. Their peers respect them and the school has found that some disaffected pupils have been helped well by giving them responsibilities and thereby raising their self-esteem.
64. Leadership is now good in almost all subjects. Curriculum leaders are very clear on how they want their departments to develop. The school's leadership team feels a strong corporate responsibility for the direction and improvement of the school and all members are very clear about their own roles and responsibilities within the team. Heads of year offer good leadership to their teams concerning the management and support of pupils with difficulties.
65. Managers at all levels are very committed to the objectives of the school. The line management system is effective. It is particularly so in performance management, which is not only carefully targeted to improve the performance of individuals, but is also well focused on school priorities. Training needs are identified clearly and provided effectively. The induction of the large number of new staff has been good. New staff are given a great deal of support. For example, they have received additional tuition in teaching styles from a leading teacher.



## **Pupils and students with a special educational need**

66. The co-ordinator for special educational needs provides very good leadership with a good team of well-qualified learning support assistants and teachers. There is very good management of the department with continuous developments designed to improve the provision for pupils. For example, whilst current record keeping is satisfactory, good work is being undertaken to establish a more efficient computer-based system, which will provide easier access to information and assist in the planning of reviews and visits. A learning support group consisting of representatives from each subject and learning support staff meets regularly to discuss issues, share information and review strategies used in the classroom. A school governor attached to the learning support department is made fully aware of developments in learning support and monitors progress well. The annual governors' report to parents meets statutory requirements by providing information regarding provision to meet the needs of pupils with learning difficulties.
67. The school has established a unit for speech and language as a resource for the education authority. This is an excellent facility for the school, which is managed very well by the special educational needs co-ordinator and staffed by a team of language specialists. There are very well planned procedures for the referral of pupils to the unit.
68. A co-ordinator for gifted or talented pupils was appointed last year. A policy to meet the needs of these pupils is being drafted. As part of its development planning, the school has registered to gain the 'Challenge Framework' award, an education authority strategy, to meet the needs of these pupils. Currently, the approach to monitoring provision for gifted or talented pupils is under-developed. However, many departments identify gifted or talented pupils well and develop their own teaching material and resources to satisfactorily meet the needs of these pupils.

## **Commentary: sixth form**

69. The new head of sixth form shows very good leadership and has a very good rapport with students and staff. The majority of students show good attitudes because of this. Current strategic planning is now in place and is the result of very good evaluation of priorities. It includes the development of more vocational courses and general studies and wider emphasis on thinking skills.

## **Financial information**

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

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	2,982,053	Balance from previous year	(-42,413)
Total expenditure	3,025,901	Balance carried forward to the next	(-86,261)
Expenditure per pupil	3,217		

70. The financial affairs of the school are managed and controlled well. Governors are kept fully informed of the financial situation of the school on a regular basis. The school takes any necessary action relating to recommendations from its auditors' reports. The principles of best value are applied well and resources are correctly used to support the pupils' and students' learning. The school currently has a financial deficit. There was a deliberate decision of the headteacher and governing body, with the full support of parents, to go into deficit. This is in order to maintain staffing levels and to gradually reduce class sizes in Years 7 to 9. There is a

satisfactory budget recovery plan, agreed with the local authority and properly recorded by the governing body, in order to repay this deficit by the 2006-07 financial year. The school's sixth form is cost effective and the school, overall, currently provides good value for money.

## **OTHER SPECIFIED FEATURES**

### **Work-related learning**

Provision in work-related learning is **good**.

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

- Leadership and management are good and have ensured teachers receive relevant training in the development of work-related learning.
- The school has undertaken detailed audits in relation to work-related learning and has identified accurate priorities for improvement.
- Good careers education helps pupils successfully to understand the world of work.
- Work experience is good and the provision for personalised work placements is very good.
- The increasing number of vocational courses is popular amongst pupils and students.

#### **Commentary**

71. Careers education is good and offers pupils comprehensive advice on future employment possibilities. As a result, pupils in all years and students in the sixth form achieve well, for example in their understanding of the skills and preparation needed for successful job applications. They speak highly of the specialist advice they receive from teachers in school, careers staff and professionals from a range of outside agencies. Moreover, the achievement of pupils following vocational courses, many of them arranged on an individual basis to meet specific needs, is very good.
72. Although no formal teaching was seen during the inspection, pupils' learning in careers interviews and in the personalised programmes of childcare, plumbing and motor vehicle maintenance is secure. Similarly, pupils' understanding of the world of work and of the nature of business and industry is reinforced by the good work experience scheme and also by the business studies option in the GCSE years. Pupils are prepared well for their work experience, write curriculum vitae and take part in trial interviews. In addition, they complete a diary during their placement and evaluate well their performance and their learning on their return to school. Good support and guidance for pupils and students moving on to the next stage of education are, therefore, strong features.
73. Leadership and management are good and the school has taken the further implementation of work-related learning seriously. There is clear vision and real commitment to development. Teachers receive on-going training and effective links have already been established between subject departments, relevant school co-ordinators, the Connexions service and a variety of outside agencies. Furthermore, strategic planning is effective and, because the school has undertaken detailed audits of the provision for work-related learning across both the formal and informal curriculum, plans for improvement are already at an advanced stage. Work-related learning is, therefore, well placed for further success.

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

### SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 3 AND 4

#### ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

##### English

The overall quality of provision in English is **good**.

##### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers give pupils pride in their work and help them to achieve well.
- Pupils are eager to succeed by working hard in lessons and attaining good standards.
- The department is driven by a desire to improve and to raise further standards of attainment.
- Questioning and group work are not always used well in helping pupils to understand key ideas or to build well on what they already know.

##### Commentary

74. Unusually, almost all pupils take the English language and English literature examinations at GCSE. Given this high level of entry, pupils do well in reaching above average standards in the examinations. These standards are reflected well in pupils' discussions in lessons, particularly in their understanding of the books they read. By Year 11, standards are above average and pupils achieve well, making good progress in relation to their earlier attainment. This is particularly true of the pupils for whom English is an additional language.
75. In 2003, pupils' attainment in the Year 9 national tests was above average. This was a good match with the teachers' own assessments. At the time of the inspection, no national results were available for 2004, but teachers' assessments are in line with the average for 2003. Standards in the Year 9 tests have fluctuated considerably over the last four years from below average to above average. Girls outperform boys to a greater extent than nationally. However, results in the 2003 Year 9 tests were well above average when compared with all other secondary modern schools. Overall, current standards, including those of reading, writing and speaking, are above average in Year 9. This represents good achievement in relation to the average standards, particularly in writing, which these pupils bring to the school.
76. Teaching is good overall, with much that is very good. This results from an increasing, shared awareness of how best to structure lessons. A striking feature of many lessons is the wide range of strategies teachers use to engage the interest and involvement of the pupils. Learning is good because the pupils, in turn, are attentive and industrious in lessons. They are keen to know how they are getting on and how to do better. Teachers know their pupils well. Pupils who experience difficulties in learning, particularly in writing, are helped successfully to feel at ease with their work. A strength in many lessons is the quality of work on prose writing, with some challenging and imaginative activities in Years 7 and 9 in comparing different kinds of text. Teachers are often skilful at leading pupils to see the implications of what they learn for their lives and sensibilities. Pupils respond well to the teachers' positive and good-natured attitudes towards them. They are eager to show their best work to visitors. Lessons are occasionally weakened through missed opportunities to extend pupils' understanding through questioning and discussion. The result of this is that some higher-attaining pupils do not always show their true potential. Additionally, questioning is not always used to best effect to find out how well pupils are attaining and how they might do better. In these cases, teachers settle too quickly for the answers given by pupils and do not always encourage further elaboration or justification.
77. The department is well led. A great strength is the way the head of department has created a cohesive, self-critical group of teachers who work to a consistently high professional

standard. This showed itself in the constructive way the inspection was embraced as an opportunity for development. Management is good and monitoring is skilful and sensitive to the needs of individual teachers. Whilst preserving their own individual creativity, teachers have worked hard to increase the level of agreement about how best to raise standards, particularly in writing. The department has improved well since the previous inspection, particularly in the standards reached.

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

78. Pupils' skills in reading, writing and discussion are used satisfactorily across the curriculum to support learning. Pupils' competence in the use of language specific to subjects varies from subject to subject, depending on the extent to which the school's literacy policy has been implemented. There is good practice in the development and use of literacy in some departments. In this respect, work in mathematics, design and technology, art and in history is particularly good. In personal, social, health and citizenship education, discussion is used particularly well to help pupils come to understand their place in society. In these subjects, there is a strong emphasis on the use of the correct technical language. However, there is a lack of consistency in the implementation of the National Strategy, which is not sharp enough in all subjects. Nevertheless, the recently appointed literacy co-ordinator has begun to strengthen the implementation of the policy in all departments and is already making some headway. Some of the very good practice in the English department is used well in raising awareness across the school.

### **Modern foreign languages**

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

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

- Pupils achieve well by the end of Years 9 and 11 and standards at GCSE are high.
- Innovative approaches to teaching enhance pupils' learning.
- The positive attitudes of pupils towards modern foreign languages support their learning well.
- New leadership has enabled clear vision, direction and planning.

### **Commentary**

79. At GCSE, standards in French in 2003 were very high, with over twice the national average A\*-C pass rate. Nine out of ten pupils in a small entry attained these grades. In 2004, high standards were maintained with seven out of ten pupils receiving A\*-C grades. In 2003, teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 were average. The 2004 assessments showed a decline overall, which was related to the attainment on entry of the year group. Given the below average attainment on entry, pupils make good progress by Years 9 and 11.
80. Achievement is good by Years 9 and 11. In the current Year 9, standards of work are average. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress and show a good standard of accuracy in spelling and basic grammar. Gifted or talented pupils in Year 8 are encouraged well to be creative in their writing and are producing language on a par with those in Year 9. Standards in Year 11 are above average, owing to the good progress made by middle and lower-attaining pupils. In particular, pupils use past and future tenses well, they show a good standard of accuracy in the language and good awareness and application of examination technique.
81. Teaching and learning are good, two of the lessons observed being very good. In particular, the atmosphere of enjoyment in lessons creates a very positive attitude towards the languages. Pupils contribute willingly and confidently to activities in the lessons and remain committed throughout. The structure and planning of the lesson are particular strengths, as are the use of time and good emphasis in Years 10 and 11 on examination technique. There are plenty of opportunities for pupils to use their initiative and work in pairs or groups.

Teachers make very good use of games to stimulate learning and increase motivation. The challenging nature of much of the work shows their high expectation of pupils' performance. Homework is set consistently and reflects well upon the work done in lessons. Assessment and marking are good. Marking is individually targeted and is based on the teacher's expectation of the pupil's performance. There is also good, detailed feedback on consistent mistakes and on ways to improve. Teachers meet the learning needs of individual pupils well, with extended work for the more able, or extra help in the form of worksheets for the less able.

82. Leadership and management are good. A complete change of personnel has allowed the new leadership and a committed team to establish and apply strategies to counter the negative criticisms of the department in the previous report. There are firm policies, detailed schemes of work and good plans about improving teaching and learning approaches and raising attainment. Members of the team regularly and systematically observe each other teaching and share good practice. The use of ICT is constrained by restricted access to computers, but within those limits it is well organised. Improving the quality of education for modern foreign languages was a key issue at the previous inspection. Improvement has been very good as the department has responded positively to all the criticisms listed at that time.

## **MATHEMATICS**

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Because of good teaching and learning, pupils achieve well and make good progress to attain above average standards by Year 11.
- Provision for lower attaining pupils is very good so they achieve particularly well.
- Leadership and management are good and monitoring of data, although at an early stage, is improving.
- An unsatisfactory mathematics timetable has an adverse effect on some learning and teaching.

### **Commentary**

83. GCSE results in 2003 were above average compared with all schools and well above average compared with other secondary modern schools. This represents good achievement for the pupils concerned. Results in 2004 fell slightly, but were still comparable with the 2003 national average. Lower attaining pupils achieved especially good GCSE results in 2004. Pupils' results in the 2003 tests at the end of Year 9 were well above average for secondary modern schools and above average for all schools. Pupils' results in the 2004 tests were just below the average for all schools. However, compared with their attainment in Year 6, pupils have made good progress by Year 9. Test and examination results were largely confirmed by the standard of work seen in lessons and in pupils' work. Pupils' are reaching an average standard by Year 9 and are above average by Year 11.
84. Pupils achieve well throughout their time in school because teaching and learning are good. Most lessons were good, very good or excellent. Pupils with special educational needs receive good support, particularly when designated assistance is available. In the Year 8 mathematics catch-up class pupils are well supported by the teacher and a well-briefed support assistant, with additional help from a sixth form student. Consequently, carefully produced worksheets and practical group activities combined to create a very successful lesson on estimation. Teachers have very secure knowledge of their subject, so pupils steadily acquire skills well and show good understanding. Lessons are very well planned with a variety of tasks to stimulate pupils' learning. Teachers use ideas from the National Strategy effectively to engage pupils' interest and sharpen their thinking. For example, in a very good Year 9 lesson on algebra pupils showed their answers on personal whiteboards. This enabled the teacher to pick out, and deal with quickly, errors and misunderstandings. Good learning is promoted through the asking of challenging questions of specific pupils and teachers do this

routinely as part of their presentation of work. In an excellent lesson in Year 10 the teacher's enthusiasm and rapport with pupils helped them gain significantly better knowledge and understanding of probability.

85. Pupils show good attitudes to learning and often work together productively in pairs or larger groups. Pupils from ethnic minority groups also participate well in group tasks and whole class discussion. In a minority of lessons, pupils' progress is only satisfactory although teaching is good. This occurs when a few pupils, lacking interest, behaving restlessly and talking out of turn, have a negative effect on others' performance in the class. The mathematics timetable is unsatisfactory because many classes are split between teachers. This can adversely affect the learning and achievement of some pupils because it creates extra demands on teachers in having to maintain continuity and develop working relationships.
86. Leadership of the department is good. There is a positive sense of purpose with high aspirations aimed at raising pupils' achievement. Staff work together well as a team. The department has made significant curricular innovations to improve learning, for example the production of more suitable worksheets for lower attaining pupils. Management is good. There is a strong commitment to staff development and teachers' strengths are utilised effectively. The departmental website shows considerable potential with some stimulating material produced by both teachers and pupils already available. Monitoring of data on pupils' performance in tests and elsewhere is satisfactory and improving. There has been satisfactory improvement since the previous inspection. Pupils' standards have been maintained and teaching and learning continue to be good. There is better use of ICT to enhance teaching and learning.

### **Mathematics across the curriculum**

87. The use of numeracy is satisfactory overall and standards are average. Applications of numeracy are good in science, design and technology and in geography. They are satisfactory in other subjects. Teachers have attended training sessions and departmental policies are in place which are satisfactorily implemented. In science, pupils complete velocity calculations well and apply correctly rules for taking moments. In food technology they use and interpret well data from surveys and weigh and measure accurately in other aspects of design technology. In geography, pupils develop good map skills, produce climate graphs and compare well energy and power use in different countries. In history, pupils satisfactorily complete population graphs. In art, they use symmetry and create successfully two-dimensional images from solid shapes. In French, pupils interpret satisfactorily railway timetables. In ICT they use formulae satisfactorily in spreadsheet work. In GCSE physical education, pupils consider satisfactorily heart rates and speeds, but in the mainstream course there are some missed opportunities for the use of numeracy.

### **SCIENCE**

Provision in science is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Pupils have above average attainment in both national tests and GCSE examinations compared with other secondary modern schools.
- There is a significant proportion of very good and excellent teaching in the subject.
- Very good leadership of the department has identified areas needing attention.
- Assessment practices which fully inform pupils of their standard of work and give sufficient advice on how they can improve are under-developed.
- The department does not give enough attention to the development of literacy skills.
- Accommodation for the department's needs is inadequate.

### **Commentary**

88. The Year 11 GCSE aggregate results for all science courses in 2003 were slightly below the national average but above those for similar schools. The double award examination A\* to C results in 2003 were average for all schools and above average for secondary modern schools. All pupils gained an A\* to G pass. The single award science results were significantly above average for all schools and the percentage of A\* to C passes was double the national average for secondary modern schools. This represents good achievement.
89. Pupils' Year 9 test results in 2003 were average for all schools nationally but above average when compared with other secondary modern schools. Results in 2004 fell slightly, particularly those for boys. However, they remained average overall compared with all schools for the percentage of pupils gaining the expected Level 5 or above. Furthermore, although the pupils' progress between Years 6 and 9 was unsatisfactory compared with all schools, their achievement in national tests was good compared with pupils in other secondary modern schools.
90. Although pupils' attainment in Years 7 to 9 is below the national average, this reflects the below average ability of these pupils on entry, which varies appreciably from year to year. Work seen in pupils' books shows unsatisfactory attention to literacy levels, which is one reason why standards are lower than average. However, pupils in Years 10 and 11 produce work which is in line with the average. This is because of a change of course and an emphasis on new teaching styles under the direction of new key department personnel. Overall, the achievement of pupils by Year 9 is satisfactory, that by Year 11 is good and the progress of pupils is now good.
91. The overall quality of teaching and learning is good because in most lessons the majority of pupils have a secure understanding of the lesson content. Lessons are well planned by specialist teachers, who have very good subject knowledge and teach with conviction and enthusiasm. Half the lessons seen were either very good or excellent. This was because of the teaching technique and expert presentation of the material, with good opportunity for pupils to take charge of their own learning. The less successful lessons were largely attributed to less well-established working relationships and behaviour issues from some pupils who disrupted the teaching. Apart from these occasions, the very positive, harmonious and constructive working relationships are a feature of the department's work and this supports learning well. In particular, pupils of all ethnic groups work very well together and make equally good progress. Pupils with special educational needs are well known to teachers and achieve well because of the good support they receive. Pupils' work is marked regularly, though procedures are not consistent and do not always inform pupils of their current standards and how to improve. Data collected from tests is developed and used well in order to guide staff on pupils' achievements and the success of the teaching.
92. Leadership is very good. The new but experienced department leader is very well supported by other key post holders and other staff who all contribute to the success of the department. There is a clear, shared vision for the department and new initiatives have already been introduced, though some will take time to become established practice. The teachers work as

an effective and mutually supportive team with a sharing of good practice encouraged. Teachers and technicians are briefed well and all are working to the same objectives. Management of the department is good. There are clear guidelines and policies and satisfactory systems exist for monitoring and supporting the teaching. Detailed lesson plans have been produced to cover course requirements and include satisfactory references to the use of ICT. The work of the laboratory technicians is valued greatly and ensures that lessons are well resourced. However, the efficiency of the department is affected because the number of laboratories, some of which are in need of refurbishment, do not meet the current needs of the department. There has been good improvement since the previous inspection as most of the issues identified have been resolved.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Expert knowledge of specialist teachers ensures pupils are confident in their learning.
- Good teaching has led to the raising of pupils' achievement.
- Good monitoring of teachers' performance results in good professional development plans.
- Some health and safety hazards in ICT rooms have yet to be resolved.
- Not all pupils in Years 7 to 9 relate their work closely enough to National Curriculum levels.

### **Commentary**

93. GCSE results in 2003 were significantly well above average for all schools and very high for secondary modern schools. Boys performed better than girls. However, these standards were not maintained in 2004 due to a change in examination arrangements. Half of the pupils in Year 11 take a full GCSE course, the rest study a core ICT course. The evidence from inspection is that pupils on both courses acquire satisfactory skills and knowledge by Year 11, are reaching average standards and achieving well. Year 9 teacher assessments were below average in 2003, with girls gaining higher levels than boys. The school met its Year 9 ICT targets in 2004 and standards seen in lessons are in line with the average. Achievement is good because pupils enter school with ICT skills and knowledge below those expected nationally. Progress is good in all groups, including those from ethnic minority backgrounds and those with special educational needs.
94. Teaching and learning are good. Teachers understand how to get the best from their classes, particularly by encouraging pupils' independent learning. Pupils relate well to each other and share their knowledge and understanding well. They have a very good attitude to learning and make good progress in lessons. Assessment of pupils' GCSE coursework is good. It informs them well of the steps they need to take to improve. Teachers' command of subject knowledge is extensive enough in order to challenge the gifted and talented pupils. Lesson planning is good. Clear objectives and very good learning strategies are identified. Satisfactory use is made of teaching resources. Teachers expect high standards of behaviour and they encourage pupils to achieve well. As a result, pupils make good progress and produce good work. Support for pupils, including those with special educational needs, is good. Good extension work and learning opportunities are given to higher attaining pupils. For example, pupils in Year 10 keep the school's website up-to-date. Homework is used well to extend learning. Although assessment of pupils' work is generally satisfactory, not all pupils in Years 7 to 9 are fully aware of their National Curriculum levels in the day-to-day work they are doing in lessons.
95. ICT rooms are spacious and have very good wall displays. There are sufficient modern networked desktop computers and laptops for specialist ICT lessons. However, data projectors are poorly mounted, resulting in skewed image displays. Good library resources enable pupils to continue their studies independently. The ICT technicians are valued highly by the teachers. A number of health and safety issues have been identified, but have not yet



been resolved. They include poorly air-conditioned ICT rooms, trailing leads and workstations which are too high for comfortable use with the seating provided.

96. The head of department has a good vision for the future. Good leadership has ensured planning is in place to make better use of teaching resources such as interactive whiteboards, but these have yet to have an impact in lessons. The ICT team works well together. They take on extra responsibilities willingly and there is now clarity about roles and job descriptions, which was criticised in the previous inspection. There is good management. Teachers are well matched to the lessons they teach. Teaching in the department is regularly monitored and action for development is good. Improvement since the previous inspection is good. There are increased numbers of modern computers, three more ICT suites and more technician time. Examination results in Year 11 have improved and provision for Year 7 pupils is now good.

### **Information and communication technology (ICT) across the curriculum**

97. The use of ICT across the curriculum is satisfactory. Most subjects have identified ICT teaching opportunities in lesson plans. However, there is not enough access to computers and equipment, outside those in the ICT department, to allow good use in other subjects. Insufficient numbers of interactive digital whiteboards, throughout the school, reduce pupils' exposure to ICT skills. Nevertheless, the range of software is good for most subjects. However, design and technology does not have suitable computer-aided design software. Staff ICT training needs are satisfactorily identified and implemented.

## **HUMANITIES**

### **History**

Provision in history is **satisfactory**.

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

- Leadership is good and there is a clear vision for improvement.
- There is insufficient emphasis on the acquisition of historical skills and examination technique.
- The evaluation of pupils' performance is not consistently accurate.
- Teachers try hard to vary their teaching strategies in order to meet the individual learning needs of their pupils.
- Departmental display is of high quality and classrooms are adorned with pupils' work.

#### **Commentary**

98. Compared with other secondary modern schools, GCSE results in 2003 were average, although girls performed at a higher level than boys. In work seen, standards by Year 11 are below the national average and lower-attaining pupils find it difficult to analyse and evaluate sources for their reliability and utility. Teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 in 2003 were average. Current standards in Year 9 are below average. Although pupils have a secure knowledge of the topics covered, teachers do not place enough emphasis on the acquisition of historical skills. Consequently, pupils' understanding of the nature of evidence is underdeveloped. Nevertheless, from below average levels of attainment on entry to the school, pupils' achievement is satisfactory in the first three years and they are beginning to understand why there are different views of history, for example in relation to the Norman Conquest. Similarly, pupils achieve satisfactorily in Years 10 and 11, but many find the step from simple narrative to more analytical writing difficult.
99. Teaching and learning across all years are satisfactory overall. Teachers have good subject knowledge and are concerned to include youngsters of all abilities in that which the lessons have to offer. Moreover, because they are creative and attempt to meet individual needs, pupils benefit from active learning methods. For example, in a very good Year 9 lesson on enclosures, pupils dressed in contemporary eighteenth-century costume and conducted their

own debate on the future of their village. However, because teachers' assessment of academic performance is not consistently accurate, pupils are not always sure about the standards they have reached and what they need to do to improve their work.

100. Although the head of department has only been in post for a few months, her leadership is good and she has already identified strategies for improvement. Management is satisfactory and teachers recognise their pupils need to be given advice that is more detailed on examination technique. Pupils are proud of their work, which is displayed prominently in all classrooms. Overall, the department has made satisfactory improvement since the previous inspection. There are more resources to challenge pupils of all abilities, fieldwork is now a strong feature and ICT is used much more as a teaching and learning tool.

## **Geography**

Provision in geography is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The leadership and management of geography are very good and standards are improving.
- Teachers establish very high expectations for learning and behaviour.
- Teaching is very effective and enables pupils to make good progress in lessons.
- The marking of pupils' work is good.
- Teaching methods do not always consistently meet the needs of all learners.
- There is a lack of fieldwork across Years 7 to 11.

### **Commentary**

101. In 2003, GCSE results were well below average compared with all schools and below average compared with secondary modern schools. They were similar to those of previous years. However, provisional results for 2004 show a very good improvement. Overall, there is little difference in the performance of boys and girls. Standards in the current Year 11 are average. This represents good achievement by the pupils. They have a good knowledge and understanding of human and physical geography. Pupils' written work is well organised and the use of technical language is improving. It shows good application of the subject matter and a growing understanding of examination requirements. Their ability to describe events is stronger than that of explaining them. Pupils have good skills in map work and in analysing and interpreting evidence.
102. The Year 9 teacher assessments in 2003 were above average, but were slightly lower in 2004. Standards in the current Year 9 are average. This represents good achievement for all pupils in relation to when they started at the school in Year 7, including those pupils with special educational needs. Pupils of all abilities demonstrate increasingly good factual knowledge and understanding of both physical and human geography. Map work skills are satisfactory. Numeracy and ICT skills are used effectively. Pupils undertake a good range of writing tasks and the content and presentation of their work is good, although there are weaknesses with spelling and grammar.
103. The quality of teaching and learning in geography is good. All members of the department establish very high expectations for learning and behaviour, and lessons are well structured and taught with pace. Teachers have very good subject knowledge. They are enthusiastic and committed and use a wide range of effective approaches in the classroom. Pupils learn well through group work. Resources are used very effectively to make lessons interesting and to help pupils to consolidate what they have learned. However, in some lessons there is insufficient attention to meeting the needs of all learners. Pupils are identified as gifted or talented, but often there are no additional challenges presented to them. Assessment procedures are good. Pupils' work is marked accurately and there is good guidance on what they need to do to improve. Pupils are involved with their own assessment; for example, at the end of a Year 10 lesson pupils effectively assessed their understanding of problems in

urban areas. Working relationships in the classroom are very good and pupils display positive attitudes to their work.

104. The leadership and management of geography are very good. Strong departmental teamwork is helping to raise standards. Teaching staff are very well qualified. Accommodation and learning resources are of good quality and meet the needs of the curriculum well. However, the lack of fieldwork restricts activities in which pupils can broaden their experiences and apply their skills. There are good procedures in place to monitor and evaluate the work of the department. Planning is of good quality and has identified a suitable range of priorities. Improvement since the previous inspection has been good.

## Religious education

Provision in religious education is **satisfactory**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good leadership of the subject is improving standards.
- Good teaching engages pupils in their learning and working relationships are good.
- Teaching strategies do not always provide for the needs of all learners.
- Assessment procedures give insufficient guidance on pupils' performance.

### Commentary

105. In 2003, pupils followed the short course GCSE option in Years 10 and 11. Results in this course were below average and provisional results for 2004 are similar. Overall, there is little difference in the performance of boys and girls. In the current Year 11, standards are below average. This is because in the previous school year, whilst they were in Year 10, pupils were not taught religious education due to staff absence and difficulties of recruitment. The standards attained by pupils when they enter the school at the beginning of Year 7 are below the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus. However, because of staffing difficulties, no assessments were made of pupils at the end of Year 9 in summer 2004.
106. The achievement of pupils in Years 7 to 9, including those with special educational needs, is good. By Year 9, pupils have developed a good knowledge and understanding of the origins, beliefs and practices of Christianity and the other principal religions of the world. They have a good understanding of equality through their study of Martin Luther King. In Years 10 and 11, because of good teaching, the achievement of all pupils is improving and is now good. Although they are catching up quickly with missed learning, over time the achievement of pupils in Years 10 and 11 has been unsatisfactory. Nevertheless, they are developing a good understanding of how different religions view moral and social issues. Research and problem solving skills are developing well.
107. Teaching and learning are good. Good teaching is responsible for improving standards in the subject. Although much of the teaching is by non-specialists, their experience and commitment are strengths of the department. The specialist teacher has good subject knowledge and provides effective support for colleagues. Teachers use a satisfactory range of effective approaches in the classroom and pupils' learning is supported well by good quality resources. Group work and role-play involve pupils very well in their learning and are very good features of the teaching, as seen in a Year 8 lesson on the Gospels. Working relationships are good and, consequently, pupils respond well to their learning the subject. Across Years 7 to 11, pupils' learning in religious education makes a good contribution to their social, moral, cultural and spiritual development. However, in some lessons there is insufficient planning to meets the full range of pupils' needs. Pupils are identified as gifted or talented, but often there are no additional challenges presented to them. Assessment of pupils' work is satisfactory. The quality of marking is good, but the procedures do not provide pupils with an understanding of how well they are doing against national standards or those of the locally agreed syllabus.

108. The head of humanities has very recently taken responsibility for religious education. She is providing good leadership and satisfactory management of the subject. She is supported well by a senior member of staff who is a subject specialist and they work well with the other members of the team. Schemes of work are being revised satisfactorily to meet better the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus, but as yet there is little enrichment through visits or guest speakers. Planning has improved and satisfactory procedures for reviewing the work of the department have been established. Resources to support the curriculum are good, as is the quality of accommodation. There has been satisfactory improvement since the previous inspection.

## **TECHNOLOGY**

### **Design and technology**

Provision in design technology is **good**.

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

- The overall quality of teaching and learning is good because of well-planned lessons.
- The leadership of the department is very good with an ethos of high expectations.
- Assessment across Years 7 to 9 is well established and good use is made of data.
- In Years 7 to 9, there is limited technological challenge in using electronics, control systems and manufacturing processes.
- There are insufficient facilities for computer-aided design and manufacture for use within the department.
- The limited space for accommodation remains an issue for the school.

#### **Commentary**

109. GCSE results in 2003 for food, textiles and graphics were above average. However, in resistant materials, although results were below average, the majority of pupils achieved well to gain higher than predicted grades, based on their level of attainment at the start of the course. In Years 10 and 11 the overall standards in lessons are above average and progress is good. Overall, achievement is good when compared with the ability of the pupils involved. Coursework folios show above average standards in textiles and graphics. The use of ICT is not well established in coursework and research is often insufficient in providing pupils with the breadth of design information to gain higher grades. Teachers' assessments of pupils at the end of Year 9 in 2003 show average standards overall for design and technology. In lessons, standards are above average and progress is good. Overall, achievement is good compared with the ability of the pupils on entry to the school in Year 7.
110. The overall quality of teaching and learning is good. Planning is thorough and the work is challenging, so pupils make good progress with their learning. Reviews at the end of lessons effectively confirm and reinforce learning. Teachers' good working relationship with pupils contribute well to the pupils' good motivation. Pupils with learning difficulties are supported particularly well in lessons, including the effective use of learning support assistants, and these pupils make good progress. Assessment practice is well established across Years 7 to 9 and used effectively to set targets and monitor progress. In Years 10 and 11, assessment is detailed and provides constructive information for pupils, including actions for improvement.
111. Although the accommodation for design and technology is satisfactory overall, teaching rooms, whilst being well maintained and well organised, are limited in size for larger groups or older pupils. Teaching rooms have been refurbished since the previous inspection to meet the demands of teaching, but still remain small for design and technology classes. However, teachers have made the best use of the facilities and additional funding is now available to improve these further in the near future. The resources for teaching and learning are good but there are insufficient facilities for computer-aided design and manufacture for use within the

department to raise standards. Display is of a very good quality and good use is made of work produced by pupils to show high expectations of quality, content and presentation. Two technicians provide very good support for the department.

112. The new leadership of the department is very good and has led to well-planned improvements. There is a high expectation of pupils to produce good quality work. Management is very good. The head of department monitors teaching and learning effectively. Key issues are identified leading to a well-structured development plan for the department. Schemes of work in Years 7 to 9 are good, although there is insufficient coverage of electronics, control systems and manufacturing processes. However, there is a good approach to designing and making activities with all pupils gaining a good breadth of experience in using a wide range of practical skills and materials. Cross-curricular themes, for example literacy, numeracy and the use of ICT, are covered well in planning. Overall, there has been good improvement since the previous inspection.

## **VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS**

In these areas, art and design and music were inspected in depth, with drama and media studies being sampled.

### **Art and design**

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

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

- Teaching and learning are good and the majority of pupils achieve and progress well.
- The use of sketchbooks for research and development in Years 10 and 11 is good.
- Teachers and pupils enjoy good working relationships and pupils benefit well from personal tuition and guidance.
- Accommodation and technical support are inadequate to properly support the courses.
- Assessment procedures and ICT in Years 7 to 9 are not used sufficiently well.

#### **Commentary**

113. GCSE results in 2003 were average compared with both secondary modern and all schools. However, all pupils entered gained an A\*-F pass, which was better than the national average. Standards in the current Year 11 are average. This represents good achievement for the majority of pupils over the two years of the course. The introduction of the applied art vocational course, together with GCSE courses, is having a positive impact on numbers taking art and design and on the standards achieved. There is no significant variation in the achievement of different groups of pupils.
114. Teachers' assessments of Year 9 pupils in 2003 were average. However, the percentage of pupils gaining the expected level fell in 2004. Nevertheless, standards in the current Year 9 are average. This represents good achievement for pupils in relation to their knowledge, understanding and skills when they entered the school in Year 7. Lower ability pupils and those with special educational needs make good progress. Pupils apply themselves purposefully to their work and are supported well in lessons. Pupils of all abilities work well from direct observation, research and develop their art well, and use line and tone effectively in their drawings.
115. Throughout all year groups, sketchbooks are used well, but particularly so in Years 10 and 11. Pupils' work shows good influence of particular artists and important movements in art and design. Good matching of pupils' interests in art to their personal capabilities ensures that average and above average pupils are challenged sufficiently well. Pupils are given good scope to demonstrate their personal interests, ideas and responses to their own and other

cultures through the work they produce. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well and benefit from individual attention.

116. The quality of the teaching and learning are good. Very good teaching was observed when pupils were actively engaged in debate about their work and were clear about what it is they were learning. When behaviour is managed well and teachers use sharp questioning to ensure the participation of all pupils, responses are very positive. Teachers are aware of the capabilities of their pupils and often meet their needs through good quality individual tuition. They use their knowledge and subject expertise to good effect and lesson preparation is good. However, in Years 7 to 9 assessment procedures are not used well enough to inform pupils of the levels at which they are working, or what they need to do to improve. ICT is not used effectively to support pupils' learning in the subject. Large class sizes in Years 10 and 11 GCSE courses restrict the range of materials used and this has an adverse effect upon teaching and learning.
117. The leadership of art and design is good. Staff have good subject knowledge and expertise and work well as a team. Taught skills are enhanced by good opportunities for pupils to make contact with artists and art work both in and out of school. The management of the department is good. Schemes of work and departmental policies provide good guidance for staff so that consistency is ensured throughout the department. The work of the department is monitored well through classroom observations and work sampling. The absence of full technical support restricts the range of media activities taught. Improvement since the previous inspection has been good, most notably in the use of sketchbooks for research and the introduction of the applied art and design vocational course for Years 10 and 11.

## **Music**

Provision in music is **satisfactory**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Pupils achieve well as a result of good teaching.
- A lack of music technology resources means that requirements for the use of ICT are not met.
- The unsatisfactory accommodation restricts pupils' progress.
- Effective leadership is moving the department forward well.
- The range of performance opportunities is good, but the provision for specialist tuition and extra-curricular activities does not cater well enough for all pupils.

## **Commentary**

118. No pupils took GCSE music in 2003 or 2004. However, there are a good number of pupils in each of the Year 10 and 11 groups. Standards seen are average. Pupils achieve well and their performing skills are good because most of them have instrumental or singing lessons. They have good knowledge and understanding of theoretical aspects of music. However, pupils do not always make enough progress with their composing skills because of the lack of music technology resources and the lack of space in the department.
119. The 2003 teacher assessments of pupils in Year 9 show below average standards. However, the percentage of pupils gaining the expected Level 5 or above, particularly girls, improved significantly in 2004. Attainment in the current Year 9 is average. Pupils enter the school in Year 7 with below average musical skills and, as a result of effective teaching, they achieve well. Pupils with special educational needs and the more musically able also achieve well.
120. The quality of teaching and learning is good. All pupils, including those with special educational needs and those who are more musically able, learn well. This is because teachers plan their lessons effectively to meet the needs of pupils with different musical abilities. Modelling is used well and, as a result, pupils gain a better practical understanding of what they have to do. Assessment is used effectively as part of everyday teaching to help

pupils improve. However, there are missed opportunities to involve pupils in assessing their work and the work of others, or to challenge pupils further through more varied questioning techniques. Because learning activities are varied, pupils concentrate and behave well, but teaching and learning methods are restricted by the lack of small spaces for group work and the lack of music technology resources. This is affecting pupils' progress, particularly the development of their composing skills.

121. There are good opportunities for pupils to perform in school concerts, productions and school events throughout the year. However, the range of regular extra-curricular music activities, including instrumental and singing tuition, does not cater sufficiently well for the interests and abilities of all pupils. This includes those who already play instruments and the musically talented in order to develop further the pupils' musical learning and personal development. This is not only because of the limitations of the accommodation but also because the department is small.
122. Leadership is good because the head of department, who has been in post for two years, is moving the department forward well after a period of staffing instability. Improvement since the previous inspection is satisfactory overall. Departmental management is satisfactory. The new member of staff is being supported well through regular planning meetings and during lessons. A satisfactory start has been made to departmental self-evaluation, but it is not rigorous enough because of the lack of detailed analysis. Although procedures for assessment are developing well in Years 7 to 9, the range of assessment criteria is too narrow and links to National Curriculum levels are not sufficiently clear. Curriculum time in Years 7 to 9 has improved since the previous inspection and is now sufficient to cover the National Curriculum programmes of study. However, the department is unable to meet statutory National Curriculum requirements for the use of ICT in music lessons in Years 7 to 9 and to enhance pupils' composing skills in Years 10 and 11. This is because pupils do not have access to adequate and suitable music technology resources.
123. Provision in music is satisfactory overall because, although pupils achieve well as a result of good teaching and leadership is effective, the lack of ICT resources, limited extra-curricular provision and unsatisfactory accommodation are barriers to further progress. The department is aware of these issues but the school has yet to ensure that they are dealt with in practice.

### **Media studies**

124. One Year 10 lesson was sampled. Standards of attainment were below average, but pupils' achievement was good. Teaching and learning were good. This was a good lesson because the pace and clarity of purpose in the session led to the pupils being able to make good progress. There was very good use of a 'Moulin Rouge' poster as an example of visual structure and use of text. Consequently, pupils were able to analyse well the media studied. However, they were not as strong on providing justification for their own choices for their own work.

### **Drama**

125. Inspectors sampled lessons in Years 7 to 9, where standards overall were above average, and teaching, learning and achievement were very good. This is because lessons were maintained at a very good pace and pupils became very well involved as a result of inspirational and motivational teaching. Learning was excellent in a Year 8 lesson because the teaching was exceptionally nurturing of the pupils' creativity. A sensitive approach to the development of pupils' working relationships supports their personal development very well. In Year 11, two lessons were seen. Standards overall were average and teaching, learning and achievement good. Where teaching was satisfactory, pupils were motivated well, but activities did not fully extend them. Where learning was very good, there was a particularly good emphasis on evaluation and constructive criticism, which enabled the pupils to achieve very well.

## PHYSICAL EDUCATION

The provision in physical education is **good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The extra-curricular programme is very good.
- There are good opportunities for pupils' personal development.
- Leadership and management are very good.
- The time for physical education across the year groups is below national recommendations.
- Indoor specialist accommodation is limited.
- Assessment does not focus on developing pupils' understanding of how they can improve.

### Commentary

126. The GCSE physical education results for 2003 were average for all schools, but above average for secondary modern schools. In the current Year 11, standards in the GCSE group are below average, but pupils' achievement is satisfactory. In the Year 11 core physical education lessons, standards are average and pupils have made good progress since Year 9, when their standards were assessed as well below average. They combine skills and techniques accurately, and with control, and apply them with precision in drills and the full game. They also modify their skills satisfactorily according to the changing competitive situation.
127. Pupils join the school with standards which are below average. Teacher assessments of Year 9 pupils in 2003 were below, but close to, the average. However, standards improved significantly in 2004 with over 90 per cent of pupils gaining the expected Level 5 or above. Because of the school's timetable, it was not possible to see a fully representative sample of lessons by Year 9. However, although the least able pupils have standards which are well below the national average, they make good progress. Whilst skills are basic, they are applied satisfactorily with co-ordination in a game and pupils are beginning to adapt their responses to simple tactics. Overall, evidence shows attainment is average, but pupils make good progress and achievement is good in Years 7 to 9.
128. Teaching and learning across all year groups are good. In the best lessons, pupils of all abilities make very good progress because they are confident and use their initiative to apply what they have learned in creative and competitive situations. Tasks are well structured and challenge pupils to achieve their best performance. In core lessons, working relationships between pupils and teachers are very good. This gives pupils the confidence to ask questions in order to clarify their understanding. However, in most instances, pupils in all year groups were not able to analyse or describe their own performance when asked, or make suggestions for improvement. Teaching and learning across the GCSE groups are satisfactory. Pupils' written work shows evidence of a satisfactory variety of teaching methods. In Year 10 the good quality of materials used promoted good learning and understanding of the differences between sport- and health-related learning. However, the assessment of pupils' work in all year groups does not systematically inform target setting and marking is focused on what pupils know rather than what they understand.
129. The very good extra-curricular provision results from a rich and varied programme for all pupils, which includes team sport and recreational activities. This provision makes an important contribution towards complementing normal lessons, for which the time allocation falls short of national recommendations. There are good opportunities for pupils to take responsibility and develop their leadership skills through the sports council, which organises tournaments across the year groups. Pupils assist local primary schools with their sports days and pre-school clubs. Limited specialist indoor accommodation restricts the flexibility of the curriculum, particularly in Years 10 and 11.



130. The very good leadership springs from a clear vision for future development. Consequently, the development plan outlines well the priorities for improvement. In addition, the profile of physical education has been raised significantly through a number of new initiatives including the sports newsletter. Very good management results in a team of staff, including young and newly qualified teachers, working very well together. The curriculum now provides a good balance for boys and girls. Self-evaluation and monitoring are established well and systematically linked to teachers' professional development. Improvement since the previous inspection has been satisfactory.

## **BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES**

### **Business and communication systems**

Provision in business education is **good**.

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

- Standards at GCSE are very high.
- The curriculum is well supported by links with business.
- The leadership provides clear vision and direction.
- Pupils' learning is well supported by having constant access to ICT.

#### **Commentary**

131. In the GNVQ business course in 2003, pupils' pass rate was above average. In 2004, results in the GCSE business and communications systems were very high, with nine out of ten pupils obtaining grades A\*-C. One A\* candidate received a special letter of commendation from the examination board for being in the top ten in the country. The standard of work in the current Year 11 is above average. Day-to-day work shows good recall and a high quality of ICT-produced forms of communication. In the coursework, there is very good evidence of the pupils' ability to demonstrate and apply knowledge and understanding and of sound progress in analysing and evaluating skills. There is a high standard of literacy in the written work, which is also reflected in note taking. Achievement is good overall. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress alongside their peers. Year 10 pupils recall and use key terms well, but some lower attainers experience difficulty with spelling and with the layout of some unfamiliar forms of communication. Year 11 pupils are making good progress over time.
132. Teaching and learning are good. Teachers have a profound knowledge of their subject, and the structure and planning of the lessons are a particular strength. They make very good use of the pupils' own experiences to apply theory to practice. They challenge pupils to think beyond the facts and to consider the implications and consequences of particular business actions. Pupils are actively involved in lessons through questioning and discussion, which promotes good learning. This is efficient and effective, but activities tend to be teacher led. Assessment is criterion based and pupils are very much aware of their current attainment and what is required to achieve higher grades.
133. Leadership and management of the department are good. The departmental action plan has clear strategies for maintaining the high standards achieved and for increasing the number of girls opting for business. As the department is part of the business and ICT faculty, pupils have unrestricted access to computers, which supports well the communications aspect of the GCSE course. There is regular, effective monitoring and evaluation of teaching, enabling the members of the team to see and share good practice. Very good links with industry enhance the curriculum, with visits, visiting speakers and support for case studies. Pupils are involved in Young Enterprise and the ProShare Challenge and use their Year 10 work experience as a case study for coursework. The department is in the forefront in the school's bid for special status as a business and enterprise college. Business education was not reported on at the previous inspection.

## PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

### Citizenship and Personal, social and health education

Provision in the school's personal, social, health and citizenship education course is **satisfactory**.

#### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good leadership supports well the good teaching and learning across the year groups.
- The ethos of the school actively promotes pupils' skills of responsibility and participation.
- There are no explicit links between citizenship and other subjects.
- The time allocated to the course in Years 7 and 8 is unsatisfactory.
- Some good, skilful teaching supports learning well in the way it involves pupils in lessons.

#### Commentary

134. By the end of Years 9 and 11 the standards seen are at the level expected nationally. Pupils make good contributions to group discussions and consider other people's experiences when expressing their own ideas and opinions. In their written work, pupils are able to justify and express satisfactorily their opinions. In Year 11, pupils are beginning to develop satisfactorily their skills of critical awareness and evaluation. Although the quality of teaching and learning is good across all year groups, over time pupils' achievement is satisfactory. This is because too little time is allocated to the subject during Years 7 and 8. Nevertheless, in an excellent Year 7 lesson, pupils developed very good oral and listening skills through a series of very well structured interactive tasks. As a result of composing their own profile and reporting on one another's personal profiles, their social integration and co-operation with one another were very good. Skilful intervention by the teacher encouraged them to be considerate of each other's experiences as they established new social and working relationships. Two excellent 'ice breaker' games at the start and finish of the lesson served to improve the levels of their oral and listening skills. In a very good Year 11 lesson, high quality resources and materials enabled boys and girls to express their opinions collaboratively on teenage pregnancy. All pupils readily discussed potentially sensitive issues with candour and they showed a very good awareness of the social and moral interpretations of teenage pregnancy and young parenthood.
135. The school provides good opportunities for pupils to develop their skills of responsibility and participation through initiatives such as the school council and sports council. The peer-mentoring scheme promotes very good links and relationships across the age groups. There are extensive, very good links with outside agencies and presentations from visiting speakers make a very good contribution to the enrichment of both citizenship and personal, social and health education. The provision for sex and drugs education is very good and parents are encouraged to attend drugs awareness talks organised during the evenings. Very good resources help to promote very good learning.
136. Leadership is good overall, with some very good elements. The improvement plan details priorities well for what needs to be done, linking these to measurable, short-term targets. Leadership of the curriculum is very knowledgeable and innovative and reflects regular updating and refinement. Management is satisfactory overall. This is because the time allocated to Years 7 and 8 is inadequate to ensure full coverage of the citizenship curriculum over time. The absence of a citizenship audit and curriculum mapping exercise means there are currently no explicit links between other subject areas, or policies for citizenship in departmental handbooks. Nevertheless, staff work together well as a closely-knit team and this reflects the importance attached to the consistent provision of good quality teaching.

## SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM

In the inspection, six 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, the latest year for which national comparisons are available.

### *Level 3 GCE AS level courses 2003*

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Biology	14	64	65.2	7.1	11.1	16.4	20.6
Chemistry	3	0.0	72.7	0.0	13.9	0.0	24.1
Business studies	20	75	76.4	5.0	16.3	21.0	26.2
Communication studies	19	63.2	86.4	5.3	23.8	20.5	32.0
Computer studies (ICT)	20	50.0	67.0	0.0	10.9	22	21.4
English	7	100.0	82.9	14.0	17.5	31.0	28.7
General studies	33	48.5	73.9	0.0	17.8	10.9	25.7
History	3	100.0	80.7	0.0	19.5	27.0	28.6
Psychology	29	52.0	69.7	3.5	16.7	14.0	24.1
Sports / PE studies	10	50.0	73.2	0.0	11.4	15.0	23.1
Technology	7	100.0	74.9	14.0	15.1	30.0	25.3

### Level 3 GCE A level and VCE courses 2003

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Art and design	2	100.0	98.6	0.0	50.2	50.0	87.5
Biology	2	0.0	96.4	0.0	39.2	0.0	78.6
Business studies	10	70.0	98.7	10.0	36.8	38.0	80.1
Chemistry	2	100.0	97.6	0.0	49.0	50.0	84.9
Communication studies	11	90.9	99.4	0.0	37.8	56.4	82.1
English literature	6	83.3	99.5	0.0	46.5	36.7	86.5
Design and technology	6	83.3	97.8	33.3	35.0	66.7	77.9
History	5	100.0	99.0	0.0	44.6	60.0	84.6
Information technology	21	66.7	95.6	4.8	24.6	40.0	69.5
Mathematics	1	100.0	96.7	0.0	55.6	60.0	88.8
Other social studies (Psychology)	8	75.0	97.4	12.5	42.7	55.0	81.8
Sports / PE studies	12	100.0	98.0	8.3	30.9	63.3	75.2
VCE Business	18	77.8	65.0	11.1	14.6	57.8	60.1
Art and design VQ	6	100.0	69.3	0.0	23.8	56.7	70.2
Information technology VQ	4	100.0	77.9	25.0	23.4	60.0	64.9

### ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

English was inspected in depth and communication studies and French were sampled.

#### English

Provision in English is **good**.

#### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students enjoy lessons and make good progress as a result of good teaching.
- Planning of lessons and the assessment of learning are not used well enough to help students become independent learners.

- The courses offered in the English department appeal to a wide range of students and many take the subject in the sixth form.

### **Commentary**

137. Overall attainment by the end of Year 13 is average. Results in both A2 and AS examinations in 2004 show a significant improvement on results for 2003, when they were below average. Although this is slightly lower than at the time of the previous inspection, improvement overall since then is satisfactory because of the good achievement of students.
138. Teaching and learning are good. In lessons, students are attentive and engaged and most actively participate in discussion. As a result of teaching which draws on good subject knowledge, students become skilled in the close reading of a wide range of texts and in writing in a variety of forms and styles. Higher attaining students write well-structured essays which demonstrate good analytical understanding. The work of middle and lower attaining students shows less confidence in applying an analytical framework to support a well-developed personal response. Written work is marked regularly, but written and oral comments by teachers on students' work are sometimes not clear enough to help students improve. Consequently, information on their earlier attainment is not always used consistently well in planning for the needs of all students.
139. Where teaching is very good, high expectations establish a productive climate for learning. Students are challenged well to apply their knowledge, skills and understanding through a variety of well-planned activities. In the minority of lessons where teaching is satisfactory the progress of all students, but particularly the more able, is constrained rather than extended by lessons which are overly dependent on the teacher. These lessons provide insufficient opportunity and challenge for students to develop independence in learning.
140. Good leadership and management have established a clear sense of direction in the department. The current pattern of courses is the result of purposeful planning. There is a good focus on the further development of the provision in English through the strengthening of schemes of work. Additionally, there are clear plans to match teaching further to the range of students' learning styles and abilities and for more teachers to contribute to post-16 teaching. English is a popular subject in the sixth form. The recently reintroduced combined language and literature course attracts a wider range of students than did the previous literature only course.

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

141. The use of literacy to enhance students' learning is satisfactory in the sixth form. There is good practice in some departments. For instance in mathematics, students are encouraged well to recount how they reach solutions and to use the technical language of the subject. In art, students benefit from good opportunities to develop the language of appraisal. In history they are encouraged to produce pieces of good extended writing. In business education they use the technical language of the subject confidently. A particular strength lies in the way students are introduced to the language of psychology through clear and precise explanations. However, in most other subjects there is not enough done to raise standards of reading and writing. The head of sixth form is already collaborating very well with the literacy co-ordinator to remedy this. Their work is beginning to bear fruit in classroom practice.

### **Communication studies**

142. Communication studies was sampled. The subject makes an important contribution to the breadth of curriculum provision in the sixth form. Students achieve well in this subject in comparison with the other subjects they study at the school. The course is taught well and the secure subject knowledge in the teaching enables all students to gain some understanding of the more challenging theoretical elements of the syllabus. However, in the teaching and planning of lessons there is insufficient emphasis on the development of students'

independence as readers, writers and thinkers. As a result of this, there is sometimes a weakness in the application and use of key concepts in the written work of students at all levels of ability.

### **Modern foreign languages**

143. One lesson of French was sampled in Year 12. Teaching, learning and achievement were good because of the constant involvement of the students and the challenge of the work. Attainment was average, but progress was good as students gained in confidence in their use of the language as the lesson developed. Subsequently, there was good consolidation of their learning when reviewed at the end of the lesson.

## **MATHEMATICS**

Provision in mathematics is **satisfactory**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Students' standards have been very low but are rising to a below average level.
- Students gain a good grounding in AS level mathematics because teachers know their subject very well.
- Leadership and management focus well on raising students' achievement and improving the attainment of potential recruits to the course.
- Teachers' marking of students' work is thorough, but is not always focused fully on each individual student's needs.

### **Commentary**

144. The Year 13 A-level mathematics course is not running in 2004-05. The attainment of students in Year 12 is below average, but they achieve well because good teaching enables them to learn well. Only one student entered the A2 examination in 2003, and gained a pass. No students were entered at AS level. AS level results in 2004 were very low. None of the six students reached a pass grade. Despite the fact that Year 12 students currently lack confidence and skill in some aspects of algebra, their AS level results are predicted to be significantly better than those of the 2004 group.
145. Students receive a good grounding in the basic AS level course from their limited starting point because teachers have very secure knowledge of their subject and present clearly relevant information. Well-planned, lively and supportive teaching helps students to come to terms with the challenging nature of the course. Students work productively and concentrate well on set tasks. However, although teachers present material effectively, there is too little whole class discussion to engage students more fully. Teachers mark students' work conscientiously but students do not always receive sufficient individual feedback, nor is future work sufficiently well targeted at their personal needs.
146. Leadership is good. Teachers work effectively as a team and are strongly committed to improving the popularity of the subject and raising students' standards. Teachers are readily available outside lesson time to help students with any difficulties. Management is good. For example, the organisation of a distinct Year 11 mathematics class, aiming at the GCSE higher tier, is intended to improve the quality and potential of subsequent Year 12 mathematics groups. Well-focused management is ensuring students' standards are recovering after a shaky period. There has been satisfactory progress overall since the previous inspection.

### **Mathematics across the curriculum**

147. The use of mathematics is satisfactory and standards are average. However, applications of mathematics are good in business studies, for example where students determine cash flow transactions. In psychology, students analyse well mental health statistics. Students complete basic calculations satisfactorily in biology, but lack some knowledge of statistical techniques. They satisfactorily complete graphs to illustrate the changing legal framework introduced by the Napoleonic Code in history.

## **SCIENCE**

The focus was on biology but chemistry was also sampled.

### **Biology**

The provision in biology is **good**.

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

- Consistently good teaching makes effective use of learning resources.
- The good leadership provides a clear vision for the subject.
- Teachers' feedback to Year 12 students on how they can improve is not consistently informative.
- Effective support, backed by good learning resources, ensures lower attainers are engaged well in lessons.

#### **Commentary**

148. Results in the 2003 AS level examination were below average, but all students from the school who entered gained a pass. There were no students from the school who entered the A2 examination in that year. Results in 2004, particularly at AS level, show that there has been an improving trend over the past few years. Students come into Year 12 with standards which are broadly average. By the end of Year 13 they achieve results which are close to average. This represents satisfactory achievement. The department has good assessment information on each individual student enabling targeted support to be offered by teachers. Consequently, standards of work seen in Year 12 are average. However, students are, in the main, less secure in linking their learning to related concepts taught previously. Year 13 students are achieving standards of work close to their expected grades.
149. Teaching and learning are good overall and linked effectively to a good assessment process. Teachers are well qualified and enthusiastic and demonstrate very good subject knowledge. Lessons are well planned and, in the main, well resourced. For example, in a Year 12 lesson good use was made of molecular models and other visual resources, ensuring the teaching matched the learning style of these students. The lessons observed incorporated several activities which enabled students to work independently or as a group. Students answer the questions asked of them, but are less confident to enter into detailed discussions. Lower attainers are given effective support because teachers break down complex problems into small, manageable chunks. However, in the case of Year 12, assessment is not used sufficiently well by teachers in ensuring work is more securely built on the level of knowledge and understanding attained by the group.
150. Assessments and homework for Year 13 students are marked in detail, with many constructive comments which help the students to improve. However, in discussions most

Year 12 students expressed the need for stronger and more frequent feedback . Analysis of the work samples provided confirmed this view. Working relationships between the teachers and students, as well as between the students themselves, are very good. This gives rise to a very pleasant working atmosphere. In discussions, students appreciated the support and guidance given by the teachers and the fact that the teachers were prepared to help and assist outside lessons.

151. Leadership and management of the department are good. The head of department has a clear vision for improvement and has created an effective team of professionals keen to make a difference. She has put in a great deal of effort to co-ordinate and review all aspects of the subject and to relate the work more closely to the needs of individual students. There are good procedures in place for monitoring and evaluating the quality of teaching and learning. The department understands well the need to build on the assessment of students' progress, especially the lower attainers, so suitable support can be given to students who start to fall below their potential grade. There has been satisfactory progress since the previous inspection and there is now a good capacity for further success.

## **Chemistry**

152. One lesson was seen which involved three Year 13 students of wide ability. The very good teaching from a confident and enthusiastic subject specialist led to very good learning and achievement. This was due to the brisk pace and frequent questioning, which constantly challenged the knowledge and understanding of this small group of students. Working relationships were very good and the students gained significantly from the support provided by their teacher.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Increased independent learning opportunities have led to good achievement.
- The expert knowledge of specialist teachers builds well students' confidence.
- Good leadership has created a good range of courses well suited to students' needs.
- Health and safety hazards in ICT rooms have yet to be resolved.

### **Commentary**

153. In 2003, half of all students entered for AS level and A-level ICT failed to complete their coursework, which led to very poor examination results. This was caused by inadequate support for students by their teachers. This has now been resolved through good management of staffing changes. Results in 2004 showed signs of improvement and standards seen in lessons are average. Results in AVCE ICT were average. All eight students who took a nationally recognised technicians' course gained well above average grades.
154. There is good achievement because students enter with levels below average. Students work well when given independent learning opportunities, which explains the success of the network technicians' course. Students who attend regularly receive the benefit of good teaching and good resources in the ICT laboratory. Progress is good in all groups, including those from ethnic minority backgrounds. There is no difference in performance between males and females.
155. Teaching and learning are good. Teachers are aware of the best way to teach their students. There are both ample group work and individual learning opportunities in lessons. Teachers encourage students to achieve highly through good guidance and support, which is leading to improving standards. Pace and challenge in lessons are good. As a result, students' attitudes



are very good and they are willing to work outside lesson hours. Tasks are planned well, challenging students to gain higher achievement. A-level students are able to do complex Visual Basic programming and error correction because of expert knowledge of their teachers.

156. Good leadership ensures teachers are matched well to the lessons they teach. Good analysis of previous examination results has led to an improvement in the provision and range of courses where all students are stretched to their capacity. The team of teachers works well together because of good management. They meet regularly to agree monitoring of standards for teaching and assessment. Although there are good risk assessment procedures in place, there are unresolved health and safety issues in the ICT rooms. For example, some workstations are too high for comfortable use with the seating provided.
157. Accommodation is good and resources are satisfactory. Rooms are spacious and have very good wall displays. The network technicians' course is resourced very well, which contributes to the success of the students. The school's own ICT technicians are knowledgeable, responsive and highly valued by the teachers. There has been good improvement since the previous inspection due to an increase in the provision of hardware and the range of courses on offer.

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

158. The use of ICT across the curriculum in the sixth form is satisfactory. The range of software is good. Students make satisfactory use of ICT for presentation of coursework in most subjects. However, there is not enough access to computers and equipment to allow good use of ICT in lessons, which reduces students' exposure to ICT skills. This has resulted in the reticence of some students to use ICT in a few subjects.

## **HUMANITIES**

The inspection focus was on psychology, but history was also sampled.

### **Psychology**

The quality of provision in psychology is **very good**.

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

- Students build quickly on the low levels of attainment they bring to the course and achieve well.
- Clear teacher explanation of key ideas helps students to feel at ease with their work.
- The very good commitment of the students to their studies shows itself in the quality of their revision notes.
- Students appreciate the extent to which the topics they study touch their lives.
- Occasionally, there are missed opportunities for students to justify their opinions convincingly.

### **Commentary**

159. Results in the 2003 AS level examination were well below average compared with other social studies subjects, but those for the A2 course showed improvement to below average standards. Students join the course in Year 12 with below average levels of attainment in their GCSE examinations and with particular weaknesses in writing. Psychology is a new subject for all of them but they settle in quickly to their studies. As a result of the good quality of support they experience they bring increasing refinement to their written and oral work. However, the current Year 12 students demonstrate average standards for this stage of their course whilst Year 13 students are set to reach just above average standards. Work in both years points to good achievement for all students. Most students stay to the end of their course and a significant number intend to continue their studies in psychology when they leave school.

160. Teaching is invariably very good. The teacher captures the interest and enthusiasm of the students through very clear explanations of central ideas and theories. A further strength is the extent to which she brings the students' own experience of life to bear on their studies. This gives them a more thoughtful understanding of the world around them. Discussions are often lively and perceptive as students acquire a more critical grasp of the psychological theories they study. The teacher's deep knowledge of what she teaches shows itself in the stimulating content of lessons. Learning is very good because the students, in turn, are eager to learn and show some real skill in discussion and debate. They take very good notes to support revision. There are occasions when questioning does not help all students to practice defending their views, with the consequence that they sometimes settle for weakly defended opinions. Students are prepared well for examinations and get a good grounding in research methods to support their investigations. Homework is used well to encourage independent enquiry. Students who experience difficulties with their coursework get a very good level of additional support.
161. The subject is very well led and managed. The head of department has done much to raise the profile of the subject in the school. The good range of books and other materials in the department is used well to support independent study. Students make good use of the Internet for independent enquiry. Standards have improved well since the subject was introduced. The subject is clearly going from strength to strength.

## **History**

162. Two lessons were sampled, one each in Years 12 and 13. Teaching, learning and students' achievement were very good. Standards were average in Year 12 and above average in the Year 13 lesson. Very secure subject knowledge and an emphasis on the involvement of students in the lessons significantly contribute to the quality of learning in this subject. This is because the teacher's approach leads to high levels of motivation and, as a result, students make better than expected progress. In the Year 12 lesson a good contribution to ICT was made through Internet research on conditions in the First World War trenches.

## **ENGINEERING, TECHNOLOGY AND MANUFACTURING**

In these areas, only design and technology was sampled.

### **Design and technology – Product design**

163. Students' work shows standards are above average for the A2 course at the end of Year 13. In a Year 12 lesson seen, the quality of teaching, learning and students' achievement were good. Standards were average but progress was good. This is because teachers' expectations are high for the quality of work produced and learning is reinforced and extended very effectively. Overall, courses are planned well to ensure students are motivated well and the work is challenging.

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

In these areas, only art and design was sampled.

### **Art and design**

164. One Year 13 lesson was seen, which involved students taking the AVCE as well as the A2 courses in the subject. Standards were above average and students' achievement was good. Teaching and learning were very good. This was because the teacher had high expectations of the students and the objectives of the lesson were clearly shared and explained. Very good subject knowledge and expertise on the part of the teacher significantly underpinned the students' learning through individual tuition and guidance.

## **HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL**

In these areas, only leisure and tourism was sampled.

### **Leisure and tourism**

165. One Year 12 lesson in this vocational course was sampled. Standards were average, but teaching, learning and students' achievement were good. Good progress was made because the teacher ensured all students understood fully the objectives for the lesson right from the start. New concepts and ideas were introduced and illustrated well through practical examples. Planning was clear and students involved well through group and pair work as well as whole class activities. The teacher's good subject knowledge engendered confidence in learning on the part of the students.

## **BUSINESS**

Provision in business education is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Pass rates in examinations are improving consistently.
- Students on the vocational course are supported very well in their attainment and progress.
- Extensive and varied links with local and national businesses support well the curriculum.
- The leadership provides clear vision and direction.
- Students have good access to ICT resources.

### **Commentary**

166. Pass rates in the A2 GCE business studies course in 2003 were below the national average. In 2004, standards were similar but nine out of ten students obtained a pass grade, which represented good achievement. At AS level in 2004, all students obtained a pass grade, a considerable improvement over 2003. Results in the 2003 AVCE business course were average, but there were no entries in 2004.
167. The standard of work of the current Year 12 students (AVCE only) is average. They are quickly acquiring presentational and organisational skills, but do not always provide sufficient detail when applying theory to practice. Year 13 AVCE students have still regularly to fulfil criteria which lead to A or B grades, but are gradually improving their evaluation skills. Standards on the A2 course are below expectations, as most work does not satisfy the higher criteria. There is a high standard of literacy in the written work of all students, which is also reflected in the quality of note taking. Achievement is good overall, as students are making good progress over time in their knowledge, understanding and application of theory to practice.
168. Teaching and learning are good, one lesson seen being very good. Teachers have an expert knowledge of their subject, and the structure and planning of the lessons are a particular strength. Students are actively involved in lessons through questioning and discussion, which promotes good learning. Those on the AVCE course have every opportunity to learn independently through research into their case studies and are questioned closely and individually on their planning and progress. Most class activities tend to be teacher led, but students are challenged to link their discussions into practical examples and to consider advantages and disadvantages of applying different business methods. Assessment is very thorough in the vocational course, especially in major assignments, where the fulfilment of criteria is acknowledged in the marking. Students receive detailed feedback of how to improve their submissions in preparation for re-drafting. In both courses, students are very much aware of their current attainment and what is required to achieve higher grades.

169. Leadership and management of the department are good. The departmental action plan has clear strategies for improving standards and for increasing the number of females opting for business courses. As the department is part of the business and ICT faculty, students have unrestricted access to computers, which supports well the post-16 courses. There is regular, effective monitoring and evaluation of teaching, enabling the members of the team to see and share good practice. Very good links with industry enhance the curriculum, with visits, visiting speakers and support for case studies. Students are involved in Young Enterprise, the ProShare Challenge and student conference revision days. Work experience is organised as part of the courses. The subject was not reported on at the previous inspection.

## PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgement</i>	<i>Sixth form grade</i>	<i>School grade</i>
<b>The overall effectiveness of the sixth form and the school</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>
How inclusive the school is		3
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	4	3
Cost effectiveness of the sixth form / value for money provided by the school	4	3
<b>Overall standards achieved</b>		<b>3</b>
Pupils' achievement	3	3
<b>Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities</b>		<b>3</b>
Attendance	4	3
Attitudes	2	2
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	3	3
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development		3
<b>The quality of education provided by the school</b>		<b>3</b>
The quality of teaching	3	3
How well pupils learn	3	3
The quality of assessment	3	4
How well the curriculum meets pupils needs	4	3
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities		3
Accommodation and resources	5	4
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety		3
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	3	3
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	2	2
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents		3
The quality of the school's links with the community	3	3
The school's links with other schools and colleges	3	3
<b>The leadership and management of the school</b>		<b>3</b>
The governance of the school	3	3
The leadership of the headteacher		2

The leadership of other key staff	2	3
The effectiveness of management	3	3

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