

INSPECTION REPORT

JOHN MASEFIELD HIGH SCHOOL

Ledbury

LEA area: Herefordshire

Unique reference number: 116955

Headteacher: Mr A Evans

Lead inspector: Mr R C Drew

Dates of inspection: 15th - 19th November 2004

Inspection number: 268839

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	11 - 18
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	994
School address:	Mabels Furlong Ledbury Herefordshire
Postcode:	HR8 2HF
Telephone number:	(01531) 631012
Fax number:	(01531) 631433
Appropriate authority:	Local Education Authority
Name of chair of governors:	Mr S Lane
Date of previous inspection:	April 1999

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

John Masefield High School is a comprehensive school of average size with 994 pupils on roll, including a small but expanding sixth form of 142 students. It serves the market town of Ledbury and its surrounding rural area. Over 98 per cent of pupils are of white British background, with a very small number of pupils from each of five ethnic minorities and ten from Traveller families. Whilst the proportion of pupils claiming free school meals is well below average, the overall level of social and economic advantage is not marked and there are sharp contrasts in pupils' living standards. About 16 per cent of pupils are on the register of special educational needs, a broadly average figure, and 3.5 per cent have formal statements. Pupils' attainment at age 11 is broadly average and covers a very wide range. Several key appointments to the staff have been made recently: the headteacher was appointed in January 2004, a deputy in September 2004 and Senior Administration Manager in April 2004. The school gained Performing Arts College status in 1999, the Artsmark Gold award in 2003, Training School status in September 2004 and Investors in People redesignation in December 2003.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
7281	Robert Drew	Lead inspector	
9710	Rosie Burgess	Lay inspector	
31129	Jeff Pickering	Team inspector	Art and design; Design and technology
27368	Michael Merchant	Team inspector	Geography; Geography (sixth form)
11975	Thelma McIntosh-Clark	Team inspector	English; English (sixth form)
18447	Ron Cohen	Team inspector	History; English as an additional language
10391	Valerie du Plergny	Team inspector	Music; Music (sixth form); Performing arts
3100	Geoffrey Hunter	Team inspector	Mathematics; Mathematics (sixth form)
21785	Veronica Kerr	Team inspector	Chemistry (sixth form); Science
10385	Keith Hopkins	Team inspector	Information and communication technology
19404	Les Schubeler	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages; French (sixth form); Work-related learning
13217	Malcolm Butterworth	Team inspector	Physical education; Physical education (sixth form); Special educational needs
30427	Felicity Shuffle-Botham	Team inspector	Citizenship; History (sixth form); Religious education

The inspection contractor was:

Tribal PPI
1 - 4 Portland Square
Bristol
BS2 8RR

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

The **overall effectiveness of the school is good**, with much that is very good and some excellent features. Pupils make good progress and reach above-average standards. Teaching and learning are very effective and the headteacher leads very well. The school manages on average spending per pupil to provide good value for money. While hard work is valued, the school also succeeds in retaining pupils' happiness and enthusiasm.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Pupils achieve well at the end of Year 9, Year 11 and Year 13.
- Teaching and learning are very good.
- Standards overall are above average and rising; in a wide range of GCSE and A2 subjects, they are already well above average and achievement is very good.
- Leadership and management are very good.
- Pupils receive very good care and support; their attitudes and behaviour are very constructive.
- Provision in the performing arts is excellent and the range and quality of extra-curricular activities are excellent.
- There are excellent links with the community.
- Boys perform significantly less well than girls in Year 9 tests and at GCSE.
- Overall provision in art and design and ICT is unsatisfactory; statutory provision in religious education is also unsatisfactory.
- Resources and aspects of accommodation are unsatisfactory.
- The co-ordination of support for pupils with special educational needs in mainstream lessons is unsatisfactory.

Since the previous inspection of 1999, the school has made good overall improvement. After rapid initial gains on many fronts, progress faltered during 2001-2003, but the school is again in a period of marked improvement. Standards in Year 11 are much higher now than in 1999, teaching has improved and much accommodation has been transformed, especially sixth-form facilities. Assessment and target-setting are now much better. Post-16, standards have risen and the number of students has increased.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

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

Achievement in Years 7 to 9 is good and standards seen in Year 9 during the inspection are above average. Results in 2003 in tests at the end of Year 9 were average in mathematics, above average in science and well above average in English. 2004 figures confirm a strong upward trend in all three subjects. Compared with standards in similar schools, these results indicate good achievement. This is confirmed by the work of current Year 9 pupils who are making better than average gains because of recent improvements in teaching and in the monitoring of their progress. Standards at the end of Year 11 are currently above average and pupils achieve well. This represents a further improvement on the GCSE results of 2003 and 2004 and the barely satisfactory value-added these represented. In those two years, the school's results compared unfavourably with those for similar schools. Action taken by the headteacher has sharpened teachers' and pupils' awareness of what can be achieved in Years 10 and 11; many steps have been taken to use lesson time and independent study better and to ensure better leadership and teaching quality in several

subjects which had been under-performing. Standards achieved and progress being made during the inspection were particularly impressive in some subjects, notably history, religious education, dance, drama and music. However, standards are below average in art and ICT. Sixth-form results and standards seen are above average. Whilst the table above indicates average results in 2003, those for 2004 were far better and are matched by the standard of work seen by inspectors. Students are making good progress in lessons. Overall, **pupils' personal qualities are very well enhanced** by the school, including very good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. With some exceptions, pupils generally show **very positive attitudes and behave very well**. Many are particularly mature in their conduct. Attendance is broadly average.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The **school provides a very good quality education** for its pupils. Teaching and learning are very good and the curriculum is good.

Teaching and learning, whilst very good overall are especially successful in Years 10 and 11 and in the sixth form. In Years 7 to 9, the quality is good, but includes a small proportion of unsatisfactory teaching and learning. Teaching and learning are outstanding in dance and music and very good in English and science and a range of other subjects. However, in art and design, the quality is unsatisfactory. Pupils benefit from a good formal **curriculum and extra-curricular provision** is excellent, especially in sport and the performing arts. **Care for pupils** is very good and they receive good guidance and support. There are good **links** with parents and excellent partnerships with the wider community.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The overall quality of **leadership and management is very good**. The headteacher leads very well, showing excellent vision and commitment to pupils and staff and the leadership team is very effective. Elsewhere, leadership is good overall, very good in the sixth form and in many subjects, and occasionally excellent. It is unsatisfactory, however, in art and design. Management is good overall, with many very effective components; the work of senior staff in monitoring teaching, the curriculum and subject leadership is broadly satisfactory. The **governing body are very effective**, providing well-grounded advice and support. They fulfil most statutory duties very well, but not those relating to ICT provision, the daily act of worship and religious education in Years 10 and 11 and in the sixth form.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents view the school very positively. In both the inspection questionnaire and the meeting, they expressed much stronger support than is common. Pupils are proud of their school and have very positive views about what it offers and how they are treated. While a significant minority of pupils raise concerns about behaviour, including bullying, their anxiety is not that it is common but disappointment that there is any at all. Inspectors confirm that behaviour and attitudes are very much better than average and that any incident is dealt with very effectively by the school.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Improve the attainment of boys by ensuring that the good practice in several areas of the school's work becomes standard.
- Improve attainment in art and design to match the school's general standards by raising the quality of leadership and management and the consistency of teaching.
- Ensure that ICT resources and access to them reach an adequate standard and monitor rigorously the teaching of ICT skills and applications in all the subjects of the curriculum to ensure they provide appropriate provision.
- Take all possible steps to upgrade teaching accommodation and facilities in those areas identified in the report.

- Strengthen systems for co-ordinating support for pupils with special educational needs in mainstream lessons; ensure that both facets of provision are equally successful.

and, to meet statutory requirements:

- Provide a daily act of worship.
- Ensure that religious education provision in Years 10 and 11 and in the sixth form meets statutory requirements.
- Ensure reports to parents assess pupils' progress in ICT and citizenship.

THE SIXTH FORM AT JOHN MASEFIELD HIGH SCHOOL

There are 142 sixth form students, virtually all drawn from Year 11 in the main school. Over 20 AS and A2 subjects are offered and a limited range of other courses.

OVERALL EVALUATION

The overall **effectiveness of the sixth form is good**, as a result of very good teaching, leadership and good achievement by students. Most courses are clearly viable, but some are very small: overall **cost-effectiveness is broadly satisfactory**. The sixth form has improved very noticeably since the last inspection, with fine new premises, higher standards of attainment and better achievement. Continuation rates are very high.

The main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Standards at A2 are above average and rising and achievement is good. AS results are above average.
- Teaching and learning are very good, with examples of excellent practice.
- Students have very positive attitudes and are consulted most effectively.
- The sixth form is very well led and managed.
- Overall provision is excellent in several of the subjects inspected.
- Achievement in a minority of subjects is only satisfactory when the norm is much better.
- Value-added in a few subjects has been weak in recent examinations.

QUALITY AND STANDARDS IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES OF THE CURRICULUM

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

Curriculum area	Evaluation
English, languages and communication	Provision in English language is very good. Standards are well above average and students achieve very well. This reflects very effective teaching and excellent leadership.
	Provision in French is very good. Very good teaching and learning are helping students progress very well and reach well above average standards. The subject is very well led and managed.
Mathematics	Provision in mathematics is very good. Teaching and learning are very good. Standards are well above average. Students achieve well and the subject is well managed.
Science	Provision in chemistry is excellent. Standards are well above average because excellent teaching prevails. Students learn very well in lessons and achieve very effectively. Leadership and management of the subject are excellent.
Humanities	Provision in geography is good. Good teaching and learning enable students to make satisfactory progress and reach average standards.
	Provision in history is good. The subject is well led and managed and students achieve well. Standards are broadly average.
Visual and performing arts	The main focus was on music, but provision in dance and drama was

and media

also sampled.

Provision in music is excellent. Standards are above average and students make very good progress. This is due to very good teaching and excellent leadership and management.

Provision in dance is excellent. Standards are very high and students achieve very well. Teaching and learning are both very effective and leadership and management are excellent.

Provision in drama is excellent. Standards are well above average and students achieve very well. Teaching and learning are very good and management is very effective.

Hospitality, sports, leisure and travel

Provision in physical education is good. Standards broadly match national ones. Teaching and learning are good and students achieve well.

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

ADVICE, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

Students receive **very good advice, guidance and support**. Careers advice is readily available and tutors and teachers are invaluable sources of day-to-day help with students' academic and personal progress. The head of sixth form and the sixth form council liaise well, ensuring that issues facing students are raised early and in a constructive environment.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE SIXTH FORM

The overall quality of **leadership and management in the sixth form is very good**. It is clear and decisive and sets a very purposeful tone. There is both the vision and energy to direct sixth-form matters very effectively. Systems for monitoring and supporting students are also highly efficient. Consultation with students is far more extensive than usual so that students feel valued and involved in sixth-form life and respond very positively. The way monitoring is focused on teaching and learning and on tracking students' progress is raising standards significantly. Planning is imaginative and relevant and shows good awareness of the need to expand the curriculum to match the growing numbers and wide range of preferences of students. Whilst religious education provision in the sixth form does not meet statutory requirements, the new programme being implemented contains much that is very good.

STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Extremely positive views were offered by students interviewed, which matched the very constructive attitudes seen in lessons, private study and around school. Students responded with spontaneous enthusiasm to more than one presentation by a teacher. They are very willing to help staff and younger pupils and serve the school in other ways. The inspection questionnaire supports this overall position; it shows apparent dissatisfaction on several issues, though observations during the inspection did not support those concerns.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE MAIN INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in subjects and courses

Overall, **achievement in the school is good and standards are above average**. Girls significantly outperform boys in the main school. Standards and achievement are improving in the main school and the sixth form.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- At the end of Years 9, 11 and 13, standards are above average.
- There is a strong rise in standards in each phase of pupils' education, exceeding national improvement rates.
- Achievement is good, and is stronger than in recent years.
- Achievement in several subjects is well above average.
- Standards at the end of Years 9 and 11 in art and design and ICT are below average and achievement is unsatisfactory in art and design.
- Achievement at the end of Year 11 is no more than satisfactory in geography, citizenship and ICT, whereas in most subjects it is good or better.
- Boys underachieve in relation to girls by a wider margin than nationally.

Commentary

1. Standards have recently begun to recover and achievement has begun to improve from weaker performance during the period 2001 to 2003. At the end of Year 11 and Year 13, GCSE and A2 results now show above-average standards and represent good achievement or value-added. The main reason for improvement is the rising quality of teaching and learning. Much in-service training is being directed towards better strategies for motivating pupils, improving management of pupils and giving a clear structure to lessons. In addition, more monitoring of teaching and of pupils' work has identified strength and weaknesses and helped to focus support. New appointments have contributed well to improvement. In addition, all staff are now more confident in handling performance data and more aware of the standards they and their students should be working to. These areas have been the focus of attention of the newly-appointed headteacher and improvement strongly reflects his drive and successful motivation of colleagues.
2. The overall improvements are boosted by particularly strong performances in key subjects. Standards in Year 11 are very much better than average in science, English, history, religious education, dance, drama and music. Very effective leadership and highly efficient management help pupils gain maximum benefit from teaching, which is very good and, at times, inspirational. With the A* to C pass rate ranging from 70 to 100 per cent in these subjects, compared with 40 to 50 per cent elsewhere in the school, these subjects make an outstanding contribution. There is a wider range in the effectiveness of departments than in some schools, so that standards are average in all other subjects, except that they are below average in ICT and well below average in art and design.
3. At the end of Year 9, standards are above average overall. In science, they are well above average and in English, mathematics and most other subjects, they are above average. Test results for 2003, shown in the table below, indicate a performance well above national levels in English, and the 2004 unconfirmed results make it clear that mathematics and science have now risen to match this.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	35.7 (33.5)	33.4 (33.3)
mathematics	36.1 (35.0)	35.4 (34.7)
science	34.6 (33.8)	33.6 (33.3)

There were 155 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

4. Recent GCSE/GNVQ examination results have been broadly average by national standards, but lower than the school's targets. Given the candidates' prior attainment in Year 9, their performance at GCSE/GNVQ represented unsatisfactory value-added in 2002. Examination results improved moderately in 2003 and 2004 and achievement was, on balance, satisfactory. This reflects difficulties in translating established improvements in the lower school into better results across the full range of GCSE/GNVQ subjects: standards in some subjects have remained below average, especially the results for boys. In 2004, for instance, the overall impact of below-average results in art and design, expressive arts, geography and German seriously depressed the collective outcome.

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	54 (60)	52 (50)
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	91 (91)	91 (91)
Percentage of pupils gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	94 (95)	96 (96)
Average point score per pupil (best eight subjects)	36.4 (36.0)	34.7 (34.8)

There were 176 pupils in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

5. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well in relation to their prior attainment. Within the learning support department (LSD), their progress is monitored and recorded. Most pupils, boys and girls, make good improvements in reading and writing. A few make rapid progress. Outside the LSD, progress is not recorded sufficiently well in some subjects and is more difficult to ascertain. In 2004, of 17 pupils with special educational needs entered for GCSE examinations, 12 gained three or four passes. Three of these pupils gained good passes in English and mathematics, with two others achieving the same in double science. Because of the lack of co-ordination, information about these achievements was not readily available. Gifted and talented pupils achieve well. In English and music, pupils benefit from a fast-track curriculum that enables them to take A level in Years 10 and 11. In 2003, for example, five pupils took AS level English language in Year 11, all of whom gained grade A. In design and technology, the number of pupils gaining grade A* for GCSE is three times that attained nationally.
6. In Years 7 to 9 and Years 10 and 11, standards in art and design and ICT are below average. In art and design, achievement is also unsatisfactory. ICT resources are far too few, despite recent spending, and some schemes of work lack significant ICT components. Staff confidence in the use of ICT in lessons remains too variable. Art and design results have been low in recent GCSE examinations, and current standards are not significantly higher. This is because the subject lacks effective leadership and management and teaching is unsatisfactory. In geography, citizenship and ICT, achievement is satisfactory by national standards, but less marked than in most other subjects. These subjects provide less very good and excellent teaching than do other departments and whilst assessment is soundly used, it does not have the rigour and attention to target-setting and monitoring found more widely in school.
7. Boys underachieve compared with girls and by more than the national margin. In the 2004 GCSE results, for instance, 65 per cent of girls gained five or more A* to C passes, but only 45 per cent of boys did so. The school has made some progress in analysing the factors

behind this problem. It is already a feature when pupils enter the school, being evident in the tests for Y6 pupils; boys' underperformance persists in this school but is not created by it. However, some subjects have been very successful in reducing the gap. In science and English, for instance, teaching styles have been adjusted to help motivate boys; the high level of pupils' involvement in lessons and rapid changes of task are features that have helped boys' learning. Extensive use of coursework is another. Boys now achieve more effectively than girls in GCSE science.

The sixth form

- Standards in current Year 13 work are above average and this confirms the upward trend in A2 results begun in 2003 to 2004. In addition, the unvalidated AS results for 2004 were significantly above the national average, so that the basis for continued improvement has been established.

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

	School results	National results
Percentage of entries gaining A-E grades	85.4 (86.7)	89.4 (92.6)
Percentage of entries gaining A-B grades	26.0 (28.2)	32.6 (35.5)
Average point score per pupil	228.5 (254.2)	258.2 (263.3)

There were 52 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

- These general trends partly reflect students' positive attitudes and pride in their facilities. They owe much to the very effective new tracking and support systems which keep students, their parents, their teachers and the head of sixth form very regularly updated about their progress. Guidance systems ensure a close match of students to courses so that satisfaction and commitment to study remain high. Gifted and talented students achieve well in most subject areas and very well in English, mathematics and French. Recently, a student won a Charles de Gaulle bursary for an essay in French on engineering. Very good results in mathematics stem from the very good provision made by the department. Scholarly work in English shows a love of research for its own sake. The standards displayed by students in the performing arts are very high.
- Crucially, teaching and learning are very good indeed. They have refocused as a result of monitoring and reflection and now place greater emphasis on lesson structure, with more student participation than before. The quality of teaching in several subjects has also benefited from good new appointments. Standards closely reflect the very effective strategies of teachers and their very high expectations. All of these areas of improvement, collectively very good in recent years, derive much of their direction and impetus from the new leadership and management of the sixth form. There has been a major upgrading of accountability and expectations in every area of sixth-form work since the appointment of the current head of sixth form.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils' attendance is satisfactory and punctuality to school and lessons is good. Pupils' attitudes to school and their behaviour, including the incidence of exclusions, are very good. Pupils' personal development is very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The cheerful and caring ethos promotes very happy, confident learners.
- Relationships between pupils and with teachers are excellent.
- Pupils are keen to be involved in the extra-curricular opportunities.
- Students in the sixth form display excellent attitudes to their work.

- Pupils' ability and readiness to reflect on and appreciate others' situations are very good.
- Revised strategies to promote good behaviour are not consistently applied.

Commentary

11. The care provided for individual pupils enables all to benefit from school. Staff work hard to ensure that pupils attend, and that the curriculum and work provided for them match their individual needs. Rewards are used sensibly to encourage pupils to work hard, attain well and develop very good moral and social awareness. As a result, most pupils express very positive views about school and work hard in lessons, especially when work set is challenging and lessons are well paced. In many lessons, pupils listen well, participate in all the activities and join discussions, often drawing on previous learning.
12. Pupils are very co-operative and collaborate well, for example using each other's strengths and skills in forming a group composition in music. Especially in drama and physical education, they show a very good capability to evaluate each other's performances.
13. There is very good support for clubs after school hours, especially in the performing arts and sports. Pupils are keen to take part in productions and to represent the school. They are enthusiastic in their support for change days, when all pupils are involved in special projects and appreciate the opportunities to be involved in trips, such as visits to theatres and museums, or to benefit from trips abroad.
14. Pupils' responses to the many opportunities to develop spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness are very good, especially in drama, music, history, religious education and personal and social education. They reflect well on human situations and are attentive and sensible in year-group assemblies. In a drama lesson, they showed very good understanding of the reality of trench warfare and what it meant to individual soldiers and to their families and, in religious education, demonstrated very good understanding of the concepts of forgiveness. Pupils show a very good understanding of people's differing ways of life and cultures, including that of the minority of Travellers who attend the school.
15. The behaviour of most pupils is very good, and often excellent, although there is a minority, often lower-attaining boys, who at times try to disrupt lessons and display immature manners. Some teachers are not yet using the sanctions outlined in the recently revised behaviour policy as consistently as they should. Around school and in the morning and lunch breaks, pupils behave very well and are polite and considerate towards other pupils and adults alike. All pupils say that when bullying occurs, it is dealt with quickly and effectively. Exclusion is used sensitively as a last resort and parents are involved before these pupils return to school. There were no permanent exclusions last year.
16. In spite of consistently applying good procedures to promote good attendance, improvement has been very limited and it remains marginally above national averages. Behaviour in the school and the quality of relationships have both improved significantly since the last inspection, as have the opportunities for personal development, to which pupils respond very well.

The sixth form

17. Students' attitudes to learning in the sixth form are consistently very good, often excellent. They are positive, mature and confident and make maximum use of prior knowledge to learn more. They show very good determination and perseverance to succeed; in a debate on nuclear energy, in French, their willingness to learn from others greatly enhanced the quality of the discussion. In dance, drama and music, they collaborate well, and take the initiative in extending learning in their own time.
18. Students are very positive about their experiences of the sixth form and are very involved in the life of the school, which they find friendly and supportive. Students play a dominant role in

the school council, which has an effective voice in school development. They support the learning of younger pupils in lessons and supervise lunch breaks. They liaise with tutor groups and help them in raising funds for charities. Some students felt that they could have taken more of this responsibility lower down the school, a view shared by pupils in Year 11.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence	
School data	6.9
National data	7.2

Unauthorised absence	
School data	0.9
National data	1.2

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

Ethnic background of pupils

Categories used in the Annual School Census
White – British
White – any other White background
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean
Mixed – White and Black African
Mixed – White and Asian
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background
Black or Black British – Caribbean
Black or Black British – African
Black or Black British – any other Black background
Chinese
Any other ethnic group

Exclusions in the last school year

Number of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
945	44	0
3	0	0
3	0	0
0	0	0
2	0	0
1	0	0
0	0	0
0	2	0
0	0	0
3	0	0
0	0	0

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

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The overall **quality of education** provided by the school is **very good**. Teaching and learning are very effective and the curriculum is good with excellent enrichment opportunities.

Teaching and learning

In the school as a whole, teaching and learning are very good, especially in Years 10 and 11 and in the sixth form. Teaching and learning in Years 7 to 9 are good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning are good or very good in the great majority of lessons, and excellent practice is found in many subjects.
- Teachers have very strong subject expertise and high expectations of pupils.
- Teachers use assessment very well in the sixth form.
- Teaching and learning are excellent in dance and music and consistently very good in several other subjects.
- A small proportion of teaching and learning is unsatisfactory, most of it in Years 7 to 9.
- Teaching and learning are unsatisfactory in art and design.

Commentary

19. The school as a whole has very good teaching and learning. It is very good in Years 10 and 11 and in the sixth form and good in Years 7 to 9. Of the lessons seen during the inspection, 97 per cent were satisfactory or better, 86 per cent were at least good and over 50 per cent were very good or better. Excellent teaching occurred in 13 per cent. This is a significant improvement on the already good quality identified in the previous inspection and is indicative of the school's commitment to going beyond adequate provision and striving for the highest possible quality. Teachers expect a great deal from their pupils and themselves in the vast majority of lessons. They succeed regularly on both counts because of extensive, well-informed lesson planning and because they work hard to establish good relationships with pupils.
20. In several subjects, these features are seen at their very best. In music and dance, teaching and learning are outstanding. In science, English, history, religious education and drama, much is equally impressive and the overall quality is very good. Lessons in these areas regularly display a combination of expertise, energy and enthusiasm that inspires pupils. In addition, assessment is highly effective: teachers show a very detailed knowledge of pupils' prior attainment and their specific strengths and weaknesses; they design lessons which use this analysis to promote rapid progress across the full range of pupils.
21. The teaching of gifted and talented pupils is good. Although some departments do not have formal policies for identification, most teachers are fully aware of which pupils are best at their subject and ensure that they are provided with challenging work. This is particularly the case in physical education, where those with talent are enabled to compete at district and county level, as well as learning how to become a qualified coach in their chosen areas of specialism.
22. A small proportion of lessons, mostly in Years 7 to 9, have unsatisfactory teaching and learning. These occur when a minority of staff, generally new to the school or covering for a colleague, do not manage challenging pupils in line with school policy. Occasionally, this is exacerbated by low expectations so that pupils are not as actively engaged in demanding work as they should be. In art and design, there is some good teaching, but consistency is lacking and the overall quality of teaching and learning is unsatisfactory. The general weaknesses described above apply and are compounded by very limited use of data to set appropriate challenges and by a lack of emphasis on aspects of art and design that are essential parts of the subject's programme of study.

The sixth form

23. Teaching and learning in the sixth form are very good. All lessons observed during the inspection were at least satisfactory, and nearly 70 per cent were at least very good. Excellent teaching accounted for nearly ten per cent. This quality is achieved because staff display outstanding expertise across the curriculum and because the majority of lessons involve students actively. Teachers are experts in their fields, but are equally effective in explaining their subject to students. In addition, the school has focused on ways of ensuring that students are more than passive listeners and become active participants in acquiring knowledge and skills. Sixth-form lessons contained far more instances than is usual of students making presentations, demonstrating their grasp of a concept or practical skill. They are frequently required to help other students learn, often working in pairs or groups to pool their collective wisdom. Teachers also press students for follow-up answers once they have given a brief initial response to a question.
24. The quality of teaching and learning in the great majority of sixth-form subjects is very good. The strengths outlined above are predominant features. In some, they are so consistent as to lead to an excellent overall impact on students. This is the case in dance and music, for instance. Where these elements are less consistent, particularly when levels of challenge are not rigorously guided by assessment data, teaching remains good rather than very good. This is the case in geography and physical education.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 172 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
22 (12.8%)	65 (37.8%)	61 (35.5%)	18 (10.5 %)	5 (2.9%)	1 (0.5%)	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.

25. The teaching of gifted and talented students in the sixth form is good. Most departments identify such students informally, but teachers know who they are. In English, teaching is very good and expectations go well beyond requirements for the examination so that high attainers achieve very well. In mathematics and science, teachers are well informed and enthusiastic about their subject and results are very good. In music, teachers are particularly aware of their students' talents and develop them to an outstanding level. In this, they are especially well supported by excellent work from part-time peripatetic professional musicians. In French, excellent teaching leads to highly developed oral skills.

The curriculum

Overall provision is good. The school provides a good curriculum for pupils in Years 7 to 9 and for students in the sixth form. The curriculum for pupils in Years 10 and 11 is satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Provision for performing arts is very good.
- Enrichment through extra-curricular provision is excellent.
- The curriculum is very flexible and meets the vast majority of pupils' needs very well.
- The curriculum provided for pupils who have special educational needs has much that is very good, but also some limitations.
- Provision for personal and social development is good.
- Provision for teaching religious education and ICT is unsatisfactory.
- Resources and accommodation are unsatisfactory overall.
- The school does not provide a daily act of collective worship.

Commentary

26. The school's status as an Arts College is reflected in the very high quality of provision in the performing arts of drama, dance and music. The school was awarded Artsmark Gold in 2003, in recognition of its achievements in this area.
27. More than half of the school's pupils take advantage of the excellent extra-curricular activities. There are numerous opportunities to take part in drama workshops and stage productions, school choirs, orchestras, two jazz bands, musical ensembles, percussion club, an art club and a pottery and ceramics club. Amongst the many sporting activities are athletics, cross-country running, football, netball, rugby, trampolining, dry slope skiing, windsurfing and sailing. Less strenuous activities include bridge, child development, ICT and a programme to improve reading skills. The modern languages department arranges regular visits and pupil exchanges to mainland Europe. An activities week is arranged later in the school year.
28. Statutory requirements are fulfilled in most respects. For pupils in Years 7 to 9, the curriculum is broad and balanced and includes enhanced provision in the performing arts. In modern foreign languages in Years 7 to 9, pupils have rather less than the usual amount of time for French. In Year 9, they are able to study German, although time for this reduces that allocated to design and technology. For pupils in Years 10 and 11, there is a wide range of choices of GCSE courses. In addition, there are vocational qualifications in ICT, manufacturing, and applied business, and a BTEC qualification in performing arts. In English and mathematics, all except a small number of pupils who have special educational needs are

entered for the GCSE examinations, with considerable success. The wide variety of courses in science has led to recent improvements in examination successes. Five different courses, including two leading to vocational qualifications, are offered in physical education. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is good. The small number unable to take GCSE examinations take entry-level certificates in a range of subjects including English and mathematics. Twenty Year 10 pupils follow a work-related programme of NVQ courses in conjunction with the local further education college. Ultimately, these pupils may go on to take up modern apprenticeships.

29. The school knows its pupils well and uses a good range of approaches to support their different needs. Arrangements for pupils with special educational needs are an example of this awareness. The co-ordinator and one other specialist teacher work within a specialist base (learning support department) and make very good provision for most pupils. This is divided into junior and senior sections and gives pupils very effective support. Pupils in it are taught together for six subjects, the remaining subjects being taught by specialist teachers outside. Outside the LSD, provision for pupils with special educational needs is variable, although it is excellent in music and very good in dance and drama. It is unsatisfactory in science. Some mainstream classes do not have enough learning support and, occasionally, this causes difficulties for teachers. There is insufficient co-ordination of the provision outside the LSD in order to ensure a more standard level of provision across the whole curriculum. The gifted and talented programme includes good provision within the curriculum. In design and technology, open-ended tasks contribute to a high level of challenge for the highest attainers. In history, homework is effective in encouraging wide individual reading for research, which is further encouraged by good supportive marking from teachers. Extra-curricular events are also part of the programme. In English, participation in the speaking competition organised by the English Speaking Union provides challenge for a substantial number of pupils. Involvement in the Ledbury Festival and in "Out Loud Day", when the pupils read poems out loud to members of the public and in local primary schools, encourages a high level of performance and enhances interest in writing and reading. There are very few pupils for whom English is an additional language and of these, only a small number require additional support in language work. The other pupils are either bilingual, or they have additional special educational needs, which are catered for in the appropriate forums. The school copes well with the needs of the three pupils (Dutch, Portuguese and German) within the school and does not need to use external support.
30. The quality of personal, social and health education is good. There is a well-planned programme that has a strong focus on health, sex and drug education and fully meets statutory requirements. Specialist staff teach lessons in Years 7 to 11. Teaching has been formally monitored, though not often; nevertheless, the quality of teaching is consistently good, with much that is very good or excellent. The school also provides a good programme of careers education and guidance. Access to the up-to-date careers library and a good partnership with the Connexions service enable all students, including those in the sixth form, to make informed choices about their future plans. Provision for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is very good. All aspects have improved since the last inspection, although the requirement for a daily act of worship is still not met. Work on promoting cultural awareness, particularly of the local ethnic Traveller community, is especially noteworthy.
31. Provision for ICT, which is taught across all subjects, is unsatisfactory and fails to fulfil statutory requirements. Pupils have insufficient access in several subjects, including English, mathematics, science, design and technology, history and art and design, and systems for monitoring outcomes are inadequate. Provision for religious education does not meet statutory requirements for pupils in Years 10 and 11.
32. Resources for learning are unsatisfactory overall. They are good in the sixth form. There is a significant lack of ICT resources, which adversely affects learning in art and design, design and technology and history. It also constrains curricular developments in ICT. In addition, there is a lack of access to ICT resources for most subjects. The provision of books and

reprographic material is satisfactory. The recent provision of six interactive whiteboards that are used very effectively by teachers has a positive effect on pupils' learning. The library is small and in much need of refurbishment, work which is to be completed in April 2005 and will provide 30 new computer stations for whole-school use. Whilst many areas of accommodation are excellent and improvement since the previous inspection has been very good, some unsatisfactory facilities remain. There are insufficient teaching rooms and some lessons have to be taught wherever there is a space in the school. Some rooms within the ICT suite are small and poorly ventilated. A number of mobile classrooms are used and although they are light and spacious and well maintained, these are showing signs of age. One of the food rooms is unsatisfactory and in need of refurbishment.

33. The school does not make any provision for a daily act of corporate worship.

The sixth form

34. In the sixth form, the curriculum is good. In addition to 22 AS and A2 courses, students may select from a further six vocational courses. In Year 12, most students take four AS-level courses, going on to the A2 examinations in three of these in Year 13. The continuation rate of students between Years 12 and 13 is good. Students are regularly consulted about their choices, and considerable effort is made to fulfil their requests whenever possible. Plans for further expansion of the post-16 curriculum, including religious education provision, reflect these principles well.
35. Students take part in a number of extra-curricular activities in performing arts and sport. Several are trained as mentors to support younger pupils, especially those with special educational needs, during their lessons. Students of modern foreign languages have the opportunity for work experience in France or Germany. Very good provision is made in English, with theatre visits and writing workshops, with support from practising poets such as Roger McGough. In music, high attainers are given the chance to lead groups and organise, as well as to perform.

Care, guidance and support

The procedures to ensure pupils' care, welfare, health and safety are very good. The support, advice and guidance for pupils, based on the monitoring of their achievements and personal development, are good. The extent to which the school seeks to involve pupils in its work and development is good, and very good in the sixth form.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good care for individual needs promotes and encourages learning.
- Year teams provide very good pastoral support.
- The services of external support agencies are employed very well.
- Systematic monitoring of personal development is not fully in place.
- The use of afternoon tutor times is too inconsistent.
- Sixth form students run an effective school council.

Commentary

36. Very strong pastoral teams provide very good support for pupils from all backgrounds and of all attainment levels. Pupils and their individual circumstances are well known to staff and every effort is made to accommodate pupils' needs within the context of the school community. Senior management, heads of year and tutors take a holistic approach to pupils' welfare, and when concerns of any kind arise, they work with the pupil and parents to solve any problems. External support services are consulted and made available as necessary. Drop-in support services, such as those provided by a visiting general practitioner, nurse, and the Connexions careers service, are available to all pupils. Procedures to ensure the health

and safety of pupils, and to protect children from neglect or abuse, are very good, and well understood by all staff. The pastoral teams meet very regularly to share any concerns.

37. Whilst many of the afternoon tutor periods provide a quiet period to prepare pupils for their last lesson of the day, there is no consistent programme to ensure that this time is always used effectively. The best sessions provide a quiet time for reading or completion of achievement folders, and tutors check homework diaries and take the opportunity to discuss matters with their tutees. However, too many are social gatherings and, once the register has been taken, are noisy and unproductive. At present, tutors' involvement in the systematic monitoring of pupils' personal development is ad hoc, although a computerised system to monitor sanctions and rewards was being implemented at the time of the inspection. Monitoring and evaluation of personal, social and health education, including citizenship, are insufficient to target accurately the best guidance for pupils.
38. The quality of support and guidance has improved since the last inspection.

The sixth form

39. Students are well supported by tutors and the head of sixth form who discuss progress and targets on a regular basis. Guidance for work experience and work shadowing is very thorough. Students meet regularly as tutor groups, although some of the tutor sessions are non-productive, being little more than social gatherings.
40. Students run the school council and through this have a very full involvement with pupils in all year groups and in the development of school procedures. A notable success so far has been in effecting changes in school uniform. Pupils and students have also been consulted on the revised behaviour policy and on the school's values and mission statement and asked for their comments on the race equality policy before its final adoption by the governing body.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The effectiveness of the **school's links with parents is good**. The quality of **links with the community is excellent** and the provision of extended services is very good. Links with other schools and colleges are very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Links with the community, especially through the performing arts, are excellent.
- Liaison with primary schools is excellent.
- The Traveller community is involved in promoting racial awareness amongst pupils.
- Very good information is provided to parents about school events.
- Consultation with parents is very good.
- Parents do not receive full reports on their children's progress in ICT and citizenship.

Commentary

41. The school is an integral part of the local community, working with performing arts and literary groups to mutual benefit. The sports facilities are shared with the local community. Music, dance, drama and physical education all benefit from these links. Representatives from the school were involved in the establishment of youth services in the town. Pupils in Year 10 are welcomed by many of the local businesses for work experience placements. Very good use is made of local support services to meet individual pupils' needs.
42. The excellent links with the local pyramid of schools help staff development and prepare pupils for life in the high school and for a secondary school curriculum. Links are especially

strong in music, dance, drama and information technology, and expertise is tailored to meet individual schools' needs. The quality of provision provided to junior pupils through outreach lessons provides an excellent base for learning in the performing arts when pupils join the high school. Very good links are maintained with other secondary schools and colleges, enabling a wider curriculum to be offered to pupils in Years 10 and 11.

43. Understanding of the dominant local ethnic culture was significantly improved when the policy for racial equality was initiated. Travellers were invited into school to explain their culture and celebrate it with other pupils, providing an excellent example of the way the school works with the local community.
44. Parents receive very good information through the school prospectus, governors' annual report and a monthly newsletter. They are also kept well informed about what their children will be studying through the issue of curriculum booklets, and good information about option choices. Whilst they receive an annual report on progress, this does not fulfil statutory requirements in reporting on progress in ICT and citizenship. Parents expressed some concern about the information they receive on their children's progress; the annual report is now being supplemented with termly progress checks, which provide a very good basis for discussions with teachers. Parents are supportive of the school, are pleased with pastoral arrangements and generally feel that children make good progress.
45. Since the last inspection, the quality and extent of partnerships with parents, other schools and the community have improved.

The sixth form

46. Students benefit from the excellent links that the main school has forged with the local community. Some students are engaged in a community action programme of work. They also complete a period of work experience and some are able to undertake this abroad. There are some good collaborative links with local colleges and universities that help students make choices for beyond the sixth form.
47. Students are very happy with the sixth form provision. They find it a friendly place, where students with different tastes and from different backgrounds can get on well together.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The school is very well led and managed; the headteacher leads very effectively; governance is very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The headteacher's leadership is very good.
- Support from the senior leadership team is very effective.
- Management systems are good.
- Governors know their school very well and provide very good strategic advice and support.
- Leadership and management in several subjects are very good.
- The sixth form is very well led and managed.
- Monitoring and support by the senior leadership team is satisfactory, while the remainder of their work is very effective.
- Leadership and management of art and design are unsatisfactory.
- Provision of ICT and religious education does not meet statutory requirements.
- Provision for pupils with special educational needs outside the LSD lacks adequate co-ordination.

Commentary

48. The headteacher, relatively recently appointed, is having a very beneficial impact on the school. He has high aspirations and has rapidly devised strategies for raising standards at GCSE. Their decline during 2001-2003 was rightly the main concern. His energy and commitment are very impressive and are matched by the way in which data-handing and the tracking of pupils' progress have been promoted throughout the school. Already, pupils are achieving more effectively and standards are rising as a result.
49. Morale in the school is high, strongly reflecting the clear direction set by the headteacher, and his success in building a senior leadership team that shares and extends his role. The calibre of individuals is high and their collective impact is creative and positive. Their personal qualities and careful planning have led staff, pupils and parents to appreciate that the headteacher and his senior colleagues are caring and committed. This perception, along with their strategic thinking and policies, has driven improvement forward.
50. The leadership and management of most subjects and year groups are good. The quality in music is excellent and in dance, drama, history, religious education, English and science, it is very effective. Such quality derives principally from the personal qualities of leaders in these subjects and their ability to gather supportive colleagues around them and form strong teams. They all exhibit great enthusiasm for their subjects and a commitment to offering pupils the very best provision. In addition, they display a very detailed knowledge of pupils and their capabilities and are able to help them work to very challenging targets. The management of provision for gifted and talented pupils is satisfactory: the newly-appointed co-ordinator has made a good start by re-launching the programme, and has provided some very good materials provided for heads of department to use. A special needs co-ordinator manages the main LSD very well. She and one other specialist teacher make very effective provision for the pupils, but there is insufficient co-ordination of the provision outside the LSD in order to ensure a more standard level of provision across the whole curriculum.
51. The monitoring of teaching and of the work of subject leaders is a relatively recent feature and is currently only satisfactory. A valuable programme of lesson observations and reviews of subjects by the headteacher, leadership team and senior staff have contributed significantly to improved teaching. Very good in-house coaching of teachers and professional development training are helping to broaden and sharpen classroom skills. However, not enough is done to monitor middle management and the curriculum compared with most schools; weaknesses have had some, but insufficient, attention and have persisted too long. These include leadership and management of art and design, the curricular arrangements for religious education and ICT and the co-ordination of provision for pupils with special educational needs outside the LSD. All these have had some attention, but its impact has been too limited. Elsewhere, however, monitoring of subjects has helped them expand their strengths and reduce weaknesses.
52. Arrangements for the professional development for staff are very good and a strength of the school. Very good coaching of teachers by Advanced Skills Teachers on the staff and equally good training programmes are helping teachers broaden and improve their classroom skills.
53. Governors have a far better knowledge of their school than is common, which enables them to participate actively in all stages of policy formulation. They give well-founded strategic advice and support. However, the school does not meet statutory requirements for ICT, religious education and reports to parents. Despite these failings, which require rectification, the governing body is very effective.

Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	3,451,164
Total expenditure	3,335,743
Expenditure per pupil	3,335

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	36,326
Balance carried forward to the next year	24,886

54. Administratively, the school is run very efficiently and support staff contribute significantly to its success. Financial management is good and has recently improved as a result of a good appointment by the school. Value for money is good because the school uses its income wisely and enables pupils to make good progress.

The sixth form

55. Leadership and management are very good and have enabled sixth-form provision to improve significantly in recent years. This has reversed a decline in standards that began in 2001. Numbers are rising, standards and achievement are improving and a very good ethos has been created. The head of sixth form has been in post for three years and combines clear, decisive and energetic leadership with very systematic planning and administration so that his drive and vision are well directed. Students receive very good personal support and challenge. Their progress is monitored closely and objectives are shared with them and their teachers and form the basis of frequent reviews with the head of sixth form. Meetings between student groups and staff are far more frequent and useful than in many sixth forms. Consultation is thus reassuring to students and informative to both sides. The quality of teaching and learning and its impact on students is also closely monitored. Far more lessons now involve extensive participation by students than was the case in 1999.

OTHER SPECIFIED FEATURES

Work-related learning

Overall provision in work-related learning (WRL) is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good management is leading to increased provision of vocational courses.
- There are good opportunities for some pupils to take part in off-site learning.
- A good programme of careers education enables all pupils to be aware of future opportunities.
- Pupils' awareness of WRL is underdeveloped in the everyday curriculum.

Commentary

56. The school is gradually developing a good, well-managed and well-organised programme of work-related learning. Approximately one-third of Year 11 pupils and a half of Year 10 pupils follow vocational courses in GNVQ business, GNVQ ICT or applied GCSE in manufacturing. In addition, all Year 11 pupils follow a well-planned work-related learning programme as a part of PSHE. Plans for further development are sound and carefully considered, in keeping with the steps that have already been taken.
57. There are good links with Hereford College of Technology. Twenty pupils from Year 10 go there each week to take four-week taster courses in a wide variety of vocational subjects. They then choose one of the subjects in which to follow a full NVQ course. Without exception, the pupils are very enthusiastic about this increased flexibility programme, which is open to all pupils. They talk and write positively about their experiences and about the generic skills and qualities that they develop in using their initiative, in working as a member of a team, in relating to others and in perseverance. They appreciate the help and guidance they receive both on the course and prior to embarking on it. Good management ensures that these pupils are also able to study five or six GCSE subjects in the mainstream curriculum.
58. A week of work experience is undertaken by all Year 10 pupils towards the end of the summer term. The programme is well organised and valuable support is provided by the Connexions service. Good arrangements for the preparation and review of the experience are incorporated into careers lessons.

59. There is a good programme of careers education throughout the school. It is provided through PSHE and enhanced by good links with the Connexions service. All pupils are interviewed by a Connexions officer and the guidance they receive is highly valued.
60. The school has not carried out an audit to assess the contribution made by subjects in the everyday curriculum to the development of work-related skills. Consequently, pupils' awareness of the relevance of those skills is not as well developed as it could be.

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 AND 4

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

English

Provision in English is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils' attainment is very good, and examination results are well above average.
- Teaching is very good; in particular, pupils' work is marked very well.
- Leadership is excellent and management is very good.
- Although most pupils are positive and hard-working, recent disruptions to staffing have had an adverse impact on behaviour and learning in some classes.
- Provision for gifted and talented pupils is very good.
- Limited access to ICT prevents this from being an effective tool for learning.

Commentary

61. Results of national tests in 2003 for pupils at the end of Year 9 were well above national averages; girls' attainment was well above the national level for girls; boys' results were above levels attained by boys nationally. In national tests in 2004, pupils performed better in English than in other subjects. Teachers' assessments reflect these grades closely.
62. Results in GCSE in 2003 in both English language and English literature were well above national averages, with both boys and girls performing better in English than in their other subjects. In 2004, results in English were a little higher; 23 pupils were awarded A grades, and nine gained A* grades. Almost the entire year group is entered. During the inspection, standards of work by pupils in Year 9 and in Year 11 were above average. There were strong signs of steadily rising attainment in many completed pieces of work, indicating that the trend towards well above average attainment is being maintained.
63. Pupils enter the school with well above average prior attainment in English. They use a wide vocabulary, and their reading and writing abilities are good. Pupils develop a secure technique for systematic critical analysis and are able to relate literature to its historical and social context. Pupils in Year 7 undertook research into the social conditions in London, in association with their study of *Oliver Twist*, and pupils in Year 9 discovered, from reading *Lord of the Flies*, the fragility of civilisation. Pupils in Years 10 and 11, recognised social prejudice in texts as diverse as *The Merchant of Venice* and *To Kill A Mockingbird*, and when studying the poetry of Seamus Heaney, demonstrated good levels of insight and perception into the poet's childhood memories. In general, pupils' work is well organised in paragraphs, and standards of spelling and punctuation are acceptable. However, too many pupils, boys especially, fail to recognise the importance of accuracy from the outset, with the result that even final drafts contain erratic spelling and punctuation. Given their overall high levels of attainment, more pupils are capable of being more conscientious in proofreading. Not enough use is made of ICT to improve this aspect of pupils' work.
64. When given the opportunity to work in pairs or small groups, pupils speak clearly and fluently, and listen well to one another's contributions. Pupils of higher attainment in a Year 8 class showed a very good grasp of style in speech-making, and readily evaluated each other's presentations, after studying the techniques of a number of famous speakers.
65. Pupils at all stages achieve well because teaching is generally very good. Teachers' professional expertise is very good and they have high expectations. Their rigorous marking

provides pupils with a clear understanding of their levels of attainment, and how to improve further. Lessons proceed at a swift pace, with very good interaction, permitting pupils to express opinions and ideas and consolidate their learning. Occasionally, usually when supply teachers were providing cover for absent colleagues, boys of average attainment failed to achieve well. Pupils with special educational needs make very good progress. Almost all are entered for GCSE, and they succeed well because they are supported very well, both within classes and by very carefully marked work.

66. There is very good provision for pupils who are gifted and talented. Pupils who attain very highly are encouraged to take national tests a year early. In 2003, five pupils in Year 11 took the AS language examination alongside their other GCSE courses. All were awarded grade A. Two then went on to gain A grade in the A2 examination in 2004.
67. Leadership is excellent. The department has been beset by staffing crises, but the head of department has preserved a coherent, focused team and has successfully protected pupils from any adverse effects. The induction of new members of staff replacing colleagues on long-term absence has been very effective. In addition, two PGCE students have been supported and their work developed. The quality of management is very good. The monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning is thorough, and documentation, such as schemes of work and departmental policies, is detailed and comprehensive. The assessment policy is currently being modified to include more opportunities for self-assessment. There are good links with local primary schools, and with teachers of pupils in the LSD. Enrichment opportunities are well exploited: there are regular theatre trips and close links with the annual Ledbury Poetry Festival. However, there is not enough delegation of responsibility for examination courses, or for the literacy policy, all of which are overseen by the head of department.
68. Resources are good, but access to, and training for, ICT are unsatisfactory. The accommodation is cramped, making group work in larger classes very difficult to organise.
69. There has been a systematic response to issues raised during the previous inspection, and standards of attainment have risen. Improvement is very good.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

70. Pupils' standards of literacy in other subjects are good. They speak clearly and confidently, and use an increasingly wide vocabulary. Their writing is well presented, and the content of extended pieces shows a secure understanding of the use of paragraphs. However, there is no consistent marking of errors in spelling and punctuation. The school library is well used by pupils in Years 7 and 8, but only a minority in Years 9,10 and 11 borrow books. There is no system of monitoring pupils' borrowing habits.

Modern foreign languages

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Improvements in the quality of teaching, particularly in Years 10 and 11, are raising standards and helping pupils to achieve better than in the recent past.
- Good leadership is creating a cohesive team that works well together.
- Recent GCSE results have been below average.
- Some inconsistency among teachers in addressing the needs of individual pupils in Years 7 to 9 holds back achievement.

Commentary

71. In 2003, GCSE results in both French and German were below the national average and weaker than those that pupils gained in most of their other subjects. Girls gain a higher proportion of A* to C grades than boys and the difference is greater than that which is found nationally. However, boys perform above the national average in terms of A* and A grades, whereas girls perform below. As a result of improvements in the teaching and the appointment of a new head of department, results in German in 2004 showed a significant improvement and were above the national average for 2003. Although results in French remained below the national average in 2004, by the end of Year 11, work is now better than recent examination results would suggest. Year 11 pupils show a sound understanding of the spoken and written language, and higher-attaining pupils confidently and accurately use a wide range of expressions and complex structures.
72. In Year 9, standards are average and indicate satisfactory achievement. Higher-attaining pupils use past, present and future tenses well in their writing and demonstrate a good understanding of the spoken foreign language as a result of the extensive use of French or German by teachers during lessons.
73. The new leadership of the department is good. There is a committed drive for improvement. The head of department leads by example and he is successfully creating a team that shares a vision for the future development of the subject. There is an emphasis on improving teaching and learning and the immediate impact is particularly successful with current Years 10 and 11 pupils, who are now filling in the gaps in their knowledge and achieving well by being well prepared for GCSE examinations.
74. The overall quality of teaching is good and includes some that is excellent. Clear objectives in lessons and well-planned sequences of appropriate activities help pupils to work productively and to achieve well. Where it is available, ICT, in particular the interactive whiteboard, is used effectively by teachers in all years to stimulate pupils' learning.
75. The overall quality of teaching in Years 7 to 9 is satisfactory. Although some teaching is very good, there is greater variation than in Years 10 and 11, and a failure to match teaching to the needs of individual pupils impedes achievement in some cases.
76. Pupils in the learning support department are well provided for. Sensitive, firm teaching enables these pupils to achieve well.
77. Over a short time, there have been significant improvements in the department's management, which is now good. Good schemes of work are now in place. Newly-established assessment procedures and systems track the progress of pupils, although all pupils do not yet have a clear understanding of how they can improve their level of performance. The quality of teaching is beginning to be monitored regularly, but teachers do not have enough opportunities to observe and learn from the excellent and very good practice that exists in the department.
78. There has been good improvement since the last inspection. Good leadership and management are leading to improved teaching that is raising standards and achievement.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils learn and achieve well because of good teaching.
- Results at the end of Year 9 in 2004 were above the national average, showing an above-average rate of improvement.
- GCSE results have been above or well above average in most recent years.

- The use of ICT is not sufficiently well developed as a tool for teaching or for learning.
- A small minority of teaching is unsatisfactory.

Commentary

79. Results in national tests in Year 9 in 2003 were in line with national averages. In 2004, they were above national norms and close to being well above. Over time, results at the end of Year 9 have been improving faster than those nationally. GCSE results in 2003 were well above the national average and have been above or well above in all recent years, apart from last summer, when they were affected by staffing problems and by pupils performing less well than expected when taking modular examinations for the first time. Boys have performed less well than girls, but not consistently so. Given that the pupils come to the school with average mathematical skills, these results show that the pupils are achieving well. In most years, results, when compared with the same pupils' previous test scores, improve at above the national rate, so that improvement is good overall.
80. In Year 9, pupils' work in their books and during lessons is above average overall, and some of it is well above average. This shows good achievement over time. In Year 9, some six in ten pupils are already close to or above Level 6 and can add and subtract fractions. Higher attainers can use Pythagoras' theorem to solve right-angled triangles; lower attainers can find the third angle in a triangle when given the other two. Standards at the end of Year 11 are above average. Year 10 and Year 11 pupils produce good basic number work. Almost all are currently working at the level required to gain a GCSE grade at the end of the course, with most capable of a grade E or better and half or more capable of a grade C or higher.
81. In general, pupils achieve well. Help from learning support assistants is relatively scant in class, but where it exists it contributes to the good progress of pupils with special educational needs. There are times, however, when the teaching assistants are not informed in advance of what the lesson is to contain before they enter the room, which reduces their capacity to prepare or contribute. Teachers are, for the most part, aware of which pupils need extra assistance and know their pupils well and enable them to achieve at least as well as might be expected and often much better. A small number of pupils from each year are taught on a separate programme. Provision for these pupils is very good and they are progressing very well.
82. Pupils learn well throughout the school because teaching is good. Lessons are usually well prepared and engage the pupils' attention. They behave well and do their homework. Relationships between teachers and pupils are very good and contribute to the quality of learning. Pupils' work, especially homework, is marked to a high standard so that they can see what they have to do to improve. Teachers support and encourage pupils very effectively with praise and rewards, including merits and stickers in their exercise books. Almost all teachers are well qualified and all permanent members of staff know their subject well. In the small minority of teaching which is unsatisfactory, expertise is less consistent; for instance in one lesson, the concept of place value was not explained well.
83. During the previous inspection in 1999, it was noted that the department was not making sufficient use of modern computer technology. Only recently has the situation begun to improve. Each teacher now has a laptop computer that is well used for administration. All use them effectively for recording purposes. Some use them to enhance their teaching with presentations with projectors and neatly published work sheets. There are three interactive computer whiteboards currently awaiting delivery. The department realises that there is much to do and teacher training is in hand to make sure that the new equipment will be well used.
84. The leadership and management are satisfactory. Since the previous inspection, improvement has been satisfactory: there have been lengthy periods when the department has been subject to temporary arrangements, but teachers have shared the management

responsibilities during these times and have done well to maintain good-quality provision. The department has not, however, developed the energy and impetus of which it is capable. Nevertheless, it is well organised and effective. The teachers work together as a team. Induction for new teachers is good and morale is high.

Mathematics across the curriculum

85. Pupils demonstrate better than average mathematical and numerical skills across the range of subjects they study. In design and technology, they show that they can measure and weigh accurately. In physical education, they use statistical techniques effectively to analyse the effect of exercise on the body.
86. The school provided in-service training in numeracy and although there is a whole-school policy, cross-curricular numeracy has not been a priority. Nevertheless, although there are some inconsistencies in teaching mathematical concepts in some subjects, most departments make a satisfactory or better contribution to the pupils' improving numerical understanding and are implementing their own departmental policies. In science, for example, where the teaching is solidly based on active learning and understanding, pupils are expected to use their mathematics and so learn very well.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are well above the national averages and pupils achieve very well.
- Teaching and learning are very good.
- Leadership and management are very good.
- The curricular arrangements for some pupils with SEN are unsatisfactory.
- There is not enough equipment for pupils to use ICT as part of their learning.

Commentary

87. Pupils enter the school with standards that match the national average. In 2003, results in the national tests taken in Year 9 were above both the national average and the levels reached by pupils with similar prior attainment. Results in 2004 were better and well above the national figures. In both years, boys' results were slightly above those of girls. Over recent years, there has been a steady improvement in standards. These results show very good achievement that is shared by all pupils. Inspection evidence confirmed the maintenance of these high standards. Pupils in Year 8, for example, already have a good grasp of radiation and Year 9 pupils have a good understanding of the properties of light.
88. GCSE results in 2003 were well above both the national average and those of pupils with similar prior attainment. Pupils starting from a lower standard in Year 9 gained above-average results in 2004. Overall, these results represent very good achievement. The gap between the performance of girls and boys is less than the difference nationally, and in 2004, the boys achieved slightly better than girls. Over the last five years, there has been a rising trend in standards. All the inspection evidence, including the results of frequent tests, indicates that the present Year 10 and 11 pupils are working at standards well above the national average. At an early stage of the course, pupils in Year 10 have a secure understanding of osmosis that will facilitate their learning of major parts of the syllabus. Higher-attaining pupils in Year 11, studying all three sciences, were confidently able to derive the formula for gravitational potential energy.
89. In the lessons observed, teaching was always satisfactory or better. Two-thirds of lessons were very good or excellent. Imaginative and adventurous planning results in active, independent learning. Emphasis is always on understanding and pupils are able to record

work in their own words. There is virtually no copying from texts or whiteboards. Excellent relationships enable teachers to make lessons very demanding, confident that pupils will rise to the challenge. The respect and trust that pupils have in their teachers help them to raise their own ambitions. A lower-attaining Year 9 class concentrated hard for the full hour in an excellent and very difficult lesson on distillation. Their pleasure at being able to explain the technique was well earned. Every lesson has clear objectives that are shared with pupils and includes assessment of learning. Realising that they have achieved the objectives motivates pupils highly. If a pupil has not understood the work, teachers give immediate attention and support. Lessons are enlivened by skilled use of interactive whiteboards and frequent practical work, using very high quality resources prepared by the excellent technicians. Lessons are always effective, usually enjoyable and often exciting.

90. The recent change in leadership of the department has been a seamless transition. The improvement in the provision and the development of new initiatives are continuing without interruption. Teachers and technicians form a cohesive team committed to rigorous self-evaluation. Management systems are effective and efficient. Assessment of progress and the use of data to set and track ambitious targets for individual pupils are very good. Teaching is closely monitored and the professional development of all staff is given the highest priority. The recent introduction of rural science as a GCSE option is proving very successful. The course is now attracting pupils of all levels of attainment, who are finding the science more interesting and better suited to their needs as learners than the more traditional courses. Plans for further improvements to the provision are sensible and achievable.
91. A group of pupils with particular special educational needs have most of their lessons within the learning support department. To take advantage of specialist teachers, resources and laboratories, they have some lessons in the science department. The arrangements for these mixed-year groups do not allow for continuity in teaching. Frequent changes in the teachers responsible compromise the development of appropriate schemes of work and teaching methodology.
92. Lack of enough modern sensory probes for temperature, pH and associated computers is limiting pupils' experience of using important modern technology. They are currently generally limited to watching demonstrations by teachers.
93. There has been very good improvement since the last inspection. Standards are much higher, teaching is better and management systems have been radically improved. The potential for further gains is good.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is good in all timetabled ICT lessons.
- Too many pupils in Years 9, 10 and 11 do not receive their full entitlement to ICT, and assessment and reports do not meet statutory requirements.
- There is a lack of rigour in the mapping and monitoring of ICT provision across the curriculum, resulting in inconsistency in pupils' experiences.
- The head of department has a clear vision and commitment to develop ICT within timetabled provision, but curricular constraints and a lack of resources are barriers to progress.

Commentary

94. Pupils enter school with variable experiences in using the computer. In work seen, achievement is satisfactory by the end of Year 8 but unsatisfactory by the end of Year 9. Most pupils have made satisfactory progress in using the computer to word-process, calculate values using spreadsheets and to present information to various audiences, but work in control technology is too basic. Pupils with special educational needs achieve satisfactorily. Because pupils do not have timetabled ICT lessons in Year 9 and the provision for ICT across subjects lacks structure and rigour, assessment is ineffective. The National Curriculum levels assessed by teachers are too subjective, making comparisons with national expectations insecure. While levels are reported to parents, full reports about pupils' attainment and progress are not written.
95. GCSE results in 2003 were below average; results for 2004 were similar to those for 2003. Current standards in the Year 11 GNVQ course mirror these results and are below the national average. In Year 11 lessons, a significant minority of pupils display poor attitude and behaviour and some have limited attention spans. Higher-attaining pupils are well motivated and work hard, achieving good standards. Girls generally do better than the boys, being more conscientious and careful in their work. The absentee rate is above average, which affects standards. Teachers have to work very hard to interest and motivate the pupils, but good teaching assures satisfactory achievement overall. Pupils who do not take an examination course in the subject do not receive their full entitlement to ICT and are not effectively assessed in the subject. Their attainment is unsatisfactory.
96. Teaching is good, with some very good features. Teachers plan work effectively and provide topics that are interesting and challenging. All teachers have good subject knowledge. They know the requirements of the examination syllabus well and use a variety of teaching strategies and styles, including good use of data projectors to explain work. In the best lessons, teachers convey their enthusiasm for the subject well and successfully stimulate pupils' interest by using a range of good teaching strategies. Different learning styles are encouraged, including group and paired work. Some extension exercises are prepared to challenge and extend the gifted and talented, but this was rarely seen in practice. Assessment is good in Years 7 and 8 and in the Year 10 examination courses. Verbal assessment is good and praise is used effectively to motivate. Clear guidance is given to pupils on what they need to do to improve their work.
97. Leadership and management within the subject are good but the whole-school arrangements for managing ICT are unsatisfactory. There is insufficient rigour in mapping and monitoring, which results in patchy and inconsistent use of computers by pupils in too many subjects. The head of department has a clear vision for the development of ICT within timetabled lessons and seeks courses that are best suited to the needs of individual groups. A GNVQ intermediate ICT course has been introduced and overall standards are rising in Year 10. Non-specialist staff are supported effectively. Improvement since the previous inspection is unsatisfactory due to a range of factors, mostly related to curricular constraints and inadequate ICT resources.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

98. Provision of ICT across the curriculum is unsatisfactory. Its use within subjects is not rigorously mapped and monitored and this constrains development. The lack of sufficient ICT resources, together with a network that is often unreliable limits teachers' interest and access. Mobile classrooms are not networked to the school system, which means they cannot access the Internet. This affects the learning in religious education and citizenship. The use of the computer to generate design ideas and manufacture products is at a very basic level in design and technology. However, ICT is applied very effectively in music, where teachers make very good use of sophisticated hardware and software that greatly enrich and enhance learning. A growing number of teachers use laptops linked to interactive whiteboards in their teaching, with a positive effect on learning. The school recognises the shortfalls in ICT resources and

has well-advanced plans to remedy this deficit.

HUMANITIES

Geography

Provision in geography is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers know pupils well and relationships are conducive to learning.
- Within overall satisfactory teaching and learning, there is much that is good and very good.
- Assessments are not always thorough and do not consistently show pupils how to improve their work.
- There are too few ICT facilities available in lessons to promote learning.
- The effectiveness of leadership and management is impeded by fragmented staffing in the department.

Commentary

99. Results in the 2004 GCSE examinations were below average, but this represented a big improvement on the 2003 results, which were well below average. There was very little difference in the results of boys and girls and all achieved standards broadly in line with those which were expected of them.
100. This improvement in examination results is reflected in the standards of work seen during the inspection. Pupils enter the school with prior knowledge and understanding of geography that is just below average. By the end of Year 9, standards are average and pupils are achieving satisfactorily. There is little difference in the standards attained by boys and girls or those with special educational needs. Those pupils who are taught in the LSD, however, achieve well because of the high quality of support they receive there. Pupils are developing a good sense of place and have a secure knowledge and understanding of human patterns and processes, such as the distribution of population, but their knowledge of the physical environment is less well developed.
101. Standards are also average by the end of Year 11, an improvement over the results seen in 2004. This is a reflection of the improved approaches to teaching and planning by some members of staff. Again, there is little difference in the standards of boys and girls and pupils, including those with special educational needs, are achieving satisfactorily. Most pupils have a secure understanding of aspects of the human environment, but are far less secure when looking at the physical world. Because there is so little fieldwork or regular planned use of ICT, pupils' enquiry skills are severely underdeveloped. This also curtails the quality of the coursework that pupils submit to the examination board.
102. Teaching and learning are satisfactory, although in a substantial minority of lessons they are good and very good. Teachers know pupils well and relationships are conducive to learning. In the better lessons, pupils' interests are captured by imaginative introductions to lessons and clever use of pair and group work. In this way, pupils learn well from each other and put a great deal of effort into their learning. These lessons are lively and well planned, with learning objectives well adapted for different groups of pupils so that their needs are met. Less effective lessons fail to motivate pupils sufficiently because the teachers often talk too much and so give too little opportunity for pupils to think. Teachers do not always assess pupils' work thoroughly and set clear targets for them. Pupils therefore do not always understand how to improve and reach higher levels.
103. Leadership and management are satisfactory. New members of the department and trainee teachers are very well cared for and the head of department has started to monitor regularly

the standards of work and the quality of teaching and learning. The effectiveness of leadership and management, however, is impeded by the large number of geography teachers who have responsibilities elsewhere in the school. This makes planning and the dissemination of good practice extremely difficult and the department urgently needs an additional full-time member of staff. Improvement since the previous inspection has been satisfactory.

History

Provision in history is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils from Years 7 to 11 learn and achieve very well as a result of very good teaching.
- Pupils are stimulated and excited by high-quality teaching so that history has become a very popular subject.
- The effect of very good learning is enhanced by the pupils' very good attitudes to work.
- There is not enough systematic use of ICT to further promote research and presentation skills.
- Very good leadership provides the subject with a clear vision and direction.
- The monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning has not yet been sufficiently developed.

Commentary

104. By the end of Year 9, pupils' attainment is above average. This represents very good achievement as pupils enter the school with skills in history that are below average. Pupils understand very well how and why American society in the middle of the nineteenth century was divided in its opinions about slavery. The emphasis by teachers on thinking and enquiry skills ensures that pupils make very good progress, and higher-attaining pupils show a mature understanding of how both the proponents and opponents of slavery use their own interpretation of the scriptures to support their arguments.
105. Results at GCSE in 2003 are in line with national norms. By the end of Year 11, standards in classes seen and in pupils' work are well above average. Lower-attaining pupils know of the differences of Soviet domestic policies under Stalin, Krushchev and Brezhnev, and the higher-attaining pupils examine a range of sources very effectively to understand the attempts at westernisation by Mikhael Gorbachov. All pupils achieve very well, particularly in the development of the skills of analysis and interpretation. Pupils with special educational needs, as well as those who are gifted and talented, achieve very well because they are challenged by a range of appropriate materials. In contrast to the national trends, boys achieve better than girls. However, the achievement of all pupils is restricted by the lack of access to ICT facilities that would further promote their research and presentation skills. Pupils' lack of examination techniques means that currently their high standards in classwork are not replicated in examinations.
106. The quality of teaching in all years is very good. Teachers use their very good subject knowledge to plan a variety of stimulating activities that strongly engage the attention of all pupils. Teaching develops research skills, empathy and literacy. Teachers are enthusiastic and have high expectations of pupils' work and behaviour. They have an obvious love for their subject and this commitment is strongly communicated to pupils, providing a firm basis for learning.
107. Learning is very good. The vast majority of pupils show strong interest in the subject, co-operate well both with the teacher and with their classmates, and work and learn very effectively. Their attitudes and behaviour in class are, with the exception of a very small minority, exemplary. Such exemplary attitudes are developed and fostered by the teachers and history is now one of the most popular subjects in the school.

108. Leadership and management are very good. The recently appointed head of department has built on the work of his predecessor and has already produced documents that signal his clarity of vision about the future of the department. The documents are well informed and they underpin much of the good work of the department. In this, he is supported particularly effectively by the senior management of the school and by his colleagues, whom he, in turn, supports. The head of department is aware of the need to develop assessment techniques to monitor and evaluate the department's teaching and pupils' learning and achievement. He is also keen to increase access to ICT. He and his colleagues are very good role models for the pursuit of high standards.
109. The strong commitment to improvement has already had success, as measured by the good progress that has been made since the previous inspection. Standards in class are much higher; teaching has improved and schemes of work have been effectively revised to meet pupils' needs.
110. This is a strong department with very good potential for even greater success.

Religious education

The quality of provision for pupils on the GCSE course is very good, but overall provision is unsatisfactory because of a breach of the statutory requirement to provide religious education for all.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Results in the GCSE examination in 2004 are excellent.
- Pupils are being equipped with the skills to learn.
- Pupils are encouraged to link what they learn to biblical text, interpret and then evaluate its impact.
- Pupils have a very good understanding of the criteria for success.
- Students in Year 10 to 13 are denied their statutory right to a religious education.
- ICT is not used by students to facilitate their learning.

Commentary

111. GCSE results in 2004 were excellent and have been rising steadily for the last three years. Standards in Year 9 are average and pupils are making good achievement given their prior attainment. Their understanding of religious concepts is developing well and they identify the impact of belief on the believer. The department aims to equip them with the skills to learn, and then to provide very good opportunities to apply what they learn to present-day circumstances. As a result, their understanding of the concepts becomes more secure. They have very good opportunities to work together, and in sharing information in groups or pairs, they demonstrate the ability to listen to each other and to respect differences in others. This enables them to make good progress.
112. Standards in the GCSE group are well above average and achievement is very good. Pupils are encouraged to link what they learn to biblical text and then to interpret and identify the impact of the concept on the actions of believers. As a result, they are developing a secure understanding of religious concepts and the teachings that underpin them. Pupils have a very good understanding of the criteria for success as a result of considerable work undertaken in class. This enables them to recognise different levels of response and to identify missing elements. Pupils maintain a high level of concentration during lessons, which enables them to make very good progress. Pupils work well in groups and support each other's efforts. They take note of the work of their peers and so they learn from each other.
113. The quality of teaching and learning is very good. Teaching is excellent for the GCSE groups. Teachers place a significant emphasis on equipping pupils with the skills to learn and the

knowledge to recognise the criteria by which work is judged to be of a high level. Teachers have high expectations of pupils' effort and behaviour and so they are able to use imaginative methods that involve students actively in their learning. This energises pupils and raises the level of interest and concentration. They thus become partners in their learning. Teachers challenge pupils, but support their achievement through carefully planned lessons that enable them to reach higher levels through appropriate stages.

114. Leadership is excellent and management is very good. Leaders have vision and a great capacity for innovation. Assessment and schemes of work are being improved and designed for the whole school. ICT is being used well by the teacher and enriching the experience of pupils in lessons, although the access to ICT for students is very restricted. As at the time of the last inspection, there is inadequate curricular time to provide the statutory requirement for religious education or to deliver the Agreed Syllabus in Years 10 to 13. Plans are in place to provide a module for Years 10 and 11, although the department will not teach this and it is rare for such a module to provide any more than partial coverage. Plans for sixth-form provision have more substance but are yet to be fully implemented.
115. Improvement since the previous inspection is good. There has been a considerable rise in the standards achieved and teaching is now very good. Assessment has improved. There has been no improvement in the provision of statutory religious education for pupils in Years 10 and 11.

TECHNOLOGY

Design and technology

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are high, especially in textiles, food studies and childcare.
- Pupils achieve well.
- Teaching and learning are good.
- In resistant materials lessons there is too much emphasis on making and not enough on designing.
- Resources for learning limit curricular opportunities.
- Accommodation is unsatisfactory.

Commentary

116. Teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 in 2003 were close to average, although boys' results were well below average. GCSE results in 2003 were well above average and better than at the last inspection. Boys' results were above average while girls' were well above. The 2004 results were slightly less good: though the results in food technology, textiles and child development were amongst the best in school, resistant materials results were low.
117. Work seen is above average. Pupils enter the school with well below average knowledge and understanding of design and technology, but their work at the end of Year 9 is close to average and achievement is good. These pupils respond to a design brief, consider ideas and specifications and make prototypes based on their research. They use and care for tools and equipment correctly and safely and work co-operatively in class. Work in food and textiles reflects the high-quality planning that allows pupils to develop their particular interests. In textiles, pupils explore the limitations and possibilities offered by different materials and processes as well as the influence of fashion designers to enrich their work. In food, they produce high-quality pastries. Work in Year 11 is above average and achievement continues to be good. The best work in resistant materials tackles problems such as a flat-pack shelving system. Lower-attaining pupils make good progress and those from the LSD made excellent

progress in a lesson devoted to colour selection in furnishings, due to their teacher's planning and the skilled way in which she raised their expectations. The higher attainers make good progress and more than twice the national average gained the highest GCSE grades in 2003.

118. Teaching and learning are good, sometimes very good and occasionally excellent. Pupils enjoy lessons because teachers have good subject knowledge and relate well to their pupils, generating co-operation and enthusiasm. They have high expectations of behaviour and industry, reflected in the pace of lessons. The detailed planning in food, where pupils investigate and develop recipes from Europe and the wider world, and in textiles, where they are influenced by the colour and shape in the collages of Matisse, ensure good learning. Teachers' planning in resistant materials concentrates more on making than designing and final designs vary little from their original ideas. Design folios often lack accurate detail of specification or construction methods, and these weaknesses are transferred to some finished items. Boxes made by Year 9 pupils made little use of mixed media and gave no hint of the objects they were made to contain. Assessment is satisfactory and gives pupils a view of their progress while setting targets for the future, but the information gained from assessment is not used in planning.
119. The department is well led and managed. The head of department is ambitious for her pupils and the future development of her subject. Teaching and learning are monitored, subject documentation is organised and methodical and planning aims to raise standards. Accommodation is unsatisfactory and is a mix of old, new and recently refurbished teaching spaces spread across the school premises. Resources are unsatisfactory because the shortage of specialist computer hardware and appropriate software is making full delivery of the National Curriculum difficult, limiting computer-aided design and manufacturing to a basic level and reducing the quality of presentation in design folios. The department has made satisfactory improvement since the last inspection. Examination results, achievement and teaching and learning have all improved, but the use of ICT remains undeveloped.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

Art and design

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are well below average and achievement is unsatisfactory.
- Teaching and learning are unsatisfactory because the work is not always sufficiently demanding.
- Leadership and management are unsatisfactory because policies to improve learning are missing and the monitoring of the department's work lacks rigour.
- Relationships between students and teachers are generally good.
- There is insufficient use of computers and specialist software in Years 7 to 9.
- The teachers bring a range of interests and a genuine feel for their subject that students recognise.

Commentary

120. The teachers' assessments at the end of Year 9 were well above average. GCSE results in 2003 were well below average for both boys and girls. The 2004 results showed a further deterioration, with the boys' results being particularly poor.

121. The standard of work seen is well below average at the end of both key stages and pupils' achievements are unsatisfactory. Year 9 pupils lack the basic skills of analysis through drawing or investigation in sketchbooks. They are increasingly able to use watercolour and collage to create imaginative compositions showing the contrast between light and dark and warm and cool colours, but their knowledge of other artists or cultures is weak. Pupils are not able to talk about their work in any critical way. In Year 11, drawing skills remain undeveloped and there is an over-reliance on imagery taken from magazines rather than real life. Sketchbook work remains weak, with insufficient attention to discovery through personal research and pupils relying heavily on their teachers for guidance and direction. Annotation is largely missing from sketchbooks. Painting skills are also below average. Pupils prefer to paint in large blocks of basic colour in the manner of Opie or Caulfield. Teachers are occasionally unsure which of their students have special educational needs and lower attainers make unsatisfactory progress. Higher-attaining pupils make satisfactory progress.
122. Whilst some teaching and learning were good, and occasionally very good, during the inspection, other teaching was unsatisfactory or poor. The overall impact of teaching on examination results and the quality of the work of current pupils is also unsatisfactory. Schemes of work do not plan for progressively building on pupils' knowledge and understanding. Teachers encourage and engage their students and establish good relationships, but the expectations of pupils and teachers alike are too low. Learning was poor in a Year 9 lesson because the task of drawing caricatures lacked challenge and the teacher then had difficulty in managing deteriorating behaviour. In another lesson, Year 10 students drawing portraits resisted their teacher's best efforts by interfering with their classmates' learning and preventing them from reflecting on what they had done. Year 11 students made very good progress when using sections of Klimt's paintings to create a repeat pattern. The formal assessment of pupils' work at the end of Year 9 is inaccurate and over-generous.
123. Leadership and management are unsatisfactory. The head of department has not received management training since his appointment and the department lacks policies for the development of literacy, numeracy and spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness. Developmental planning lacks detail and the monitoring of teaching and learning require more rigour to ensure consistency across the department. Teachers bring a wide range of skills and interests to their subject. The accommodation is good but untidy and not conducive to ordered work. The learning resources are unsatisfactory and the difficulty in accessing ICT makes full delivery of the National Curriculum impossible.
124. There has been unsatisfactory progress since the last inspection. Standards have fallen and achievement is now unsatisfactory. The department continues to perform less well than other subjects. The quality of pupils' drawings and their use of sketchbooks are less good than they were.

Dance

Provision in dance is **excellent**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is excellent overall.
- Achievement is excellent overall.
- Leadership and management are excellent.
- The department makes a significant contribution to the performing arts work of the school.

Commentary

125. The quality of teaching is excellent, as is the quality of learning. Subject knowledge is excellent, as is the level of commitment to the pupils. The hallmark of the teaching is the

excellent planning for lessons so that they cater for all pupils' abilities and needs. This factor, taken with the excellent and ongoing assessment systems means that pupils and students are always aware of how they are doing and what they need to do to improve.

126. As a result of the teaching, the pupils are very efficient learners; they listen hard and work well in pairs and small groups, displaying a positively critical approach to judging the technique and art achieved by their friends. This element is built into most lessons, and is very effective in illustrating to pupils what they are trying to achieve. Pupils are increasingly used to performing in front of their classmates, sometimes overcoming major hurdles of shyness, and understanding that this subject involves performance study. In a lesson with pupils in Year 10, the work started at a basic level of understanding the place of dance in musical theatre. By the end of the session, pupils had created an impressive set of routines in groups of five or six, using a wide range of techniques and choreographic devices that only needed a little polishing for performance. This is outstanding practice. Similarly, with a group of pupils in Year 8 (some of whom were initially reluctant), by the end of the lesson, everyone had translated adjectives such as *gracefully* and *lazily* from a poem into movement and had learned how to visualise words using their movements and their voices. As a result, achievement overall is excellent. Pupils in Year 9, starting from a below average base, are now reaching above average standards, whilst in Year 11, pupils who also had limited prior attainment are now producing work which is well above average.
127. The leadership and management of this new department are outstanding. Excellent structures are in place for teaching and learning. The recent examination results do not reflect the good work evident in Years 7 to 9, or in Years 10 and 11. Staff have successfully adapted their approaches to the very wide range of pupils' needs so that current pupils are performing at a much higher level than previous groups at this stage in their courses. The extra-curricular provision is very good and extends the work of the dance department, as well as putting it in the context of the integration of all three performing arts.
128. No dance courses were running at the time of the last inspection.

Drama

Provision in drama is **excellent**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are well above average.
- Teaching is very good.
- Extra-curricular provision is excellent.
- Leadership and management are very good.

Commentary

129. Standards of attainment have been well above average in recent GCSE results, reflecting the standard of work seen in lessons. Pupils achieve well across Years 7 to 9 and by the end of Year 9, they are working at standards above, sometimes well above, average. In the lessons on the horror of the trench warfare during the First World War, pupils understood thoroughly the conflicts between fear and duty, love and sacrifice.
130. The quality of teaching is consistently very good, with some excellent practice in Years 7 to 9. The teaching is based on the twin strengths of very good schemes of work and ongoing useful and frequent assessments, so that pupils know how they are getting on and what to do to improve. As a result of this, pupils become very good at learning, knowing the value of group work and the need to trust each other, together with a sense of responsibility for their own learning.

131. In Years 10 and 11, pupils work hard, and successfully, on their interpretations of tragedy and comedy, so that they achieve moving performances of human tragedy with an unnerving accuracy of observation and portrayal. Although only the Christmas production by pupils in Years 7 to 9 was seen in rehearsal during the inspection, the school year is packed with whole-school productions which are very beneficial to everyone, but particularly to the examination candidates, as they learn what stage pressure is and how to cope with it.
132. Leadership and management of the department are very good. Schemes of work and assessment systems are excellent. Improvement since the last inspection has been very good: teaching has improved from satisfactory overall to consistently very good, with some excellent teaching in Years 7 to 9. Standards at the end of Year 9 are above average and represent very good progress. Results in GCSE examinations are well above average and these pupils are also achieving very well.
133. The recently introduced course in **drama technology** shows very clearly that the department is committed to learning about stagecraft in all its forms. At the time of the inspection, pupils were preparing for the Christmas pageant with great industry and commitment. They work well, with humour and a real will to succeed in the traditional areas of drama support, because they are well taught and helped by well-informed technical expertise.

Music

Provision in music is **excellent**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- GCSE results are very high.
- Teaching is excellent overall.
- The work covered is carefully planned and assessed.
- Pupils achieve very well.
- Leadership and management are excellent.
- There is an excellent range of extra-curricular opportunities.
- The peripatetic tutors make a very strong contribution to the musical life of the school.
- Accommodation and resources make teaching and learning very efficient.

Commentary

134. Results in the 2004 GCSE examination were excellent, with over 80 per cent of pupils gaining A* to C passes.
135. Teaching is excellent. It is extremely well informed and all teachers are not only excellent practitioners but have a contagious enthusiasm for the joint enterprise of making music. The work covered is carefully planned to reach pupils of all musical ability and experience. Work is assessed regularly and frequently so that everyone knows how they are getting on and what they have to do to improve. Pupils are able to take responsibility for their own learning, which means that pupils at all levels achieve very well from Years 7 to 9. By the end of Year 9, they are working at above-average standards, with a strong sense of the history and construction of music. This enables them, for instance, to identify readily the similarities and differences between New Orleans jazz and the Glen Miller version of the Big Band sound. The highest-attaining pupils in Years 7 and 8 attend a lesson held after school to develop their knowledge and understanding very quickly, so that they may take GCSE a year early. Current Year 11 pupils are working at well above average standards. They have built very well on their earlier work. Cumulative gains across Years 7 to 11 mean that achievement at GCSE is excellent.
136. Enjoyment, hard work and success are predominant, and teachers set an excellent example for the pupils, who achieve both a rounded musical education and examination success by the

time they reach the end of Year 11. A group of pupils in Year 10 followed a score of one of Corelli's 'Concerti Grossi', looking specifically for examples of his 'filling-in' technique, in order to help them with their own compositions. At the beginning of their GCSE career, they are already working at levels well above the accepted norms.

137. Leadership and management are excellent. Very good improvements have been made since the last inspection in terms of examination results, the quality of teaching, schemes of work and assessment systems, and a widening of the curriculum with the introduction of the first year of a music technology A level. Since the last inspection, the work done with children in the local primary schools to increase their musical skill and interest has paid dividends in terms of pupils' ability to learn quickly and well, enjoying themselves in the process. The excellent range and use of the iMac suite for composition and reinforcement and the new course in music technology make a major contribution to the breadth and depth of the department's work, and to its increasing examination success.
138. The extra-curricular provision is excellent and the large number of peripatetic tutors is a significant and visible part of this provision, with many joining or leading extra-curricular groups, ensembles, bands and orchestras. These groups have a very positive effect on the standards of attainment. The key to the music provision is the enthusiasm of all concerned - staff, pupils and students. They help each other. A sixth-former takes the flute choir and the junior orchestra is held specifically so that beginners can learn about the difficult business of playing in time and tune with a number of other instrumentalists - the orchestral discipline. To make this as effective as possible, the teacher writes specific parts for individual pupils so that they can join in, even if they can only play two or three notes at the moment. In the Junior jazz band, pupils sight-read 'Ivory Moon' with confidence, considerable accuracy and real panache because of the care and teaching they receive from the conductor and all present. In the main orchestra, with over 50 pupils and students, they sight-read the music they will perform over the Christmas period - an excellent forum for learning and development of a wide range of skills. Both these were outstanding occasions in the sense of ensemble and the standards reached.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Provision in physical education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching, with clear shared objectives helps students to learn well.
- The curriculum is well developed and offers older pupils good choices.
- Very good accommodation is conducive to good standards.
- Provision of some aspects of ICT is unsatisfactory.

Commentary

139. By the end of Year 9, standards are above average. In badminton, boys have good racket skills and a sound understanding of tactics. They are able to sustain good rallies, using a range of forehand and backhand strokes. Many of them apply tactics well. Most boys and girls across Years 7 to 9 make good progress in hockey and, by the end of Year 9, are playing to an above-average standard. Most pupils with special educational needs achieve well. However, standards of gymnastics in Year 7 are below average, largely because pupils arrive at the school with virtually no previous experience.
140. By the end of Year 11, overall standards are above average. In Year 11 lessons, boys succeeded in advancing their goalkeeping skills and girls progressed well with serving skills in badminton. Boys and girls achieve well in badminton and play the game enthusiastically. In all years, pupils with special educational needs achieve well in terms of their prior attainment. Results for the GCSE examination in 2004 were in line with the national average. Pupils work

well on this course, many with a good level of motivation. Written coursework is of a satisfactory standard and some is better than this, although it is not always effectively organised and marked in order to assist with revision. For most written coursework, pupils make insufficient use of ICT and marking is not sufficiently detailed and informative. Pupils on the Junior Sports Leadership Award are working well.

141. Overall teaching is good and, occasionally, very good. Lessons invariably start promptly, proceeding with appropriate pace and purpose. Learning objectives are clearly identified and, in most lessons, are shared with pupils at the beginning. Teachers encourage pupils to analyse their own performances, thus encouraging them to reflect about theoretical issues in the subject. Relationships between teachers and pupils are very good. They enhance pupils' attitudes towards the subject. Take-up of extra-curricular activities by boys and girls is very good indeed.
142. Leadership is good and teachers work well together as a team. There is good vision about future developments of the curriculum and examination courses. The present curriculum meets national requirements and, in Years 10 and 11, gives pupils a good selection of courses from which to choose. Management is good and ensures efficient day-to-day running of the department. Much of the accommodation for physical education is excellent. The new sports hall and floodlit pitches are clearly helping to raise practical standards and to encourage pupils' participation. However, there is no designated room of sufficient size in which to deliver theoretical aspects of the range of examination courses, and this causes difficulties for teachers.
143. Extra-curricular provision is very good. Boys and girls get many opportunities to take part in competitive sport. Individuals and teams have succeeded at district and county levels and pupils' achievements are celebrated by an award scheme. An outdoor activities week is provided for all Year 7 pupils. Improvements since the last inspection have been good, in particular those to the accommodation and the refinements made to the examination curriculum.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Citizenship

Provision for citizenship is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils benefit from whole days focused on citizenship issues.
- Good links with the local police and judiciary provide very good opportunities for questioning by pupils.
- Teachers involve pupils actively in their learning and seek to raise the level of interest.
- Insufficient time is allocated to enable pupils to investigate the topics introduced in order to strengthen their understanding.
- There is no system of monitoring pupils' individual experience and progress in citizenship.
- There is no display of citizenship topics in the school in order to raise awareness about the subject.

Commentary

144. Standards in Year 9 are average and achievement is satisfactory. Pupils recognise the work of the political parties and demonstrate their understanding through their own political broadcasts that are then discussed by other groups. Their understanding of the different voting systems is above average and they clearly understood their work on political literacy. The global citizenship day enables them to reflect on problems faced by refugees, and the effects of globalisation on the economy of the world and its resources. The very limited time

allocated to citizenship, however, and the long gaps between modules, reduces their impact and the opportunities for development and reinforcement.

145. Standards in Year 11 are average and achievement is satisfactory. Pupils have a secure understanding of the British judicial system and good links with the local constabulary. These enable them to raise questions that strengthen their understanding. They have a general overview of the work of parliament and the law-making process. There is insufficient time, however, to develop this understanding and to link the work of parliament to the responsibilities of the citizen. They have little earlier study of citizenship to build upon. The school council provides an opportunity to exercise democracy in school.
146. Some pupils have excellent opportunities to demonstrate understanding of citizenship through subjects. In drama for example, a group considered the effects of joyriding on the community. These experiences are inconsistent, however and many pupils do not have similar opportunities. A small minority have very good opportunities, for example, as the school's representatives on the local youth council and as part of the 'mock trial' competition. Pupils work well in groups because teachers encourage them to do so, but their evaluation of their work is at an early stage. Pupils undertake elements of citizenship across the curriculum and many are involved in active citizenship, but they are seldom made aware of it so their recognition of the rights and responsibilities of citizenship is not developed.
147. The quality of teaching is good. Teachers plan lessons well and use imaginative methods in order to stimulate interest. High expectations of behaviour enable them to involve pupils actively in learning and experts from the community further enrich learning experiences. The pressure of time leads teachers to attempt to cover too much in the lesson, or to leave important developments unexplored. As a result, the depth of understanding is limited and their appreciation of what they learn is reduced. Teachers have very little opportunity to assess the individual progress of pupils and there is little record of their work. Pupils do not yet evaluate their work and teachers have no means of monitoring individual progress or the effectiveness of lessons. The quality and extent of delivery through tutor time is dependent on individual teachers and so is very variable. Delivery of citizenship modules across the curriculum is not highlighted by teachers or recognised by the pupils. This means that pupils do not make links with their prior learning in order to build up their understanding of what it means to be a citizen.
148. Leadership and management are good. There is clear vision and commitment to active citizenship. The planning for discrete citizenship lessons is good. Days 'off timetable' for Years 8 and 9 are well planned to have maximum impact. The lack of clear display relating to citizenship around the school means that pupils do not make links between their actions, what they know and the learning that they undertake in this subject. Citizenship was not reported on in the last inspection.

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM

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

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

Level 3 GCE A level and VCE courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
English language	11	100.0	99.5	45.5	36.3	81.8	80.9
French	7	100.0	98.8	28.6	51.5	80.0	87.6
Mathematics	9	100.0	96.7	44.4	55.6	88.9	88.8
Chemistry	11	90.9	97.6	63.6	49.0	89.1	84.9
Geography	9	100.0	96.7	44.4	55.6	88.9	88.8
History	7	100.0	99.0	42.9	44.6	82.9	84.6
Music	1	100.0	98.8	100.0	38.9	100.0	81.1
Physical education	5	100.0	98.0	20.0	30.9	64.0	75.2

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

One lesson provided a sample of teaching and learning in English literature. Both teaching and learning were good, and students were achieving in line with their prior attainment. Results in A2 English literature examinations were above the national average in 2003 and 2004.

English

Provision in English language is **very good**.

- Students' attainment is above the national average.
- Teaching is very good.
- High-quality marking provides students with very good guidance on how to improve their attainment.

Commentary

149. Results in the A2 English language examination in 2003 were above the national average; female students' results were significantly better than male students', but relatively few male students take the course. The results in 2004 were similar. Results in the AS examination in 2004 were above average. Similar standards of attainment were seen during the inspection in both Years 12 and 13.
150. Standards of entry to the course are just above average, and achievement by students in Year 13 is very good. Students make rapid progress in Year 12 in response to focused organised teaching and rigorous assessment. They quickly come to terms with the level of detailed observation required in textual analysis. They are open-minded, enjoying the intellectual challenge of employing a new technical vocabulary to explain the geographical, historical and social influences on language changes. They explore a wide number of areas of enquiry, from the development of children's speech to generic fields associated with specialised subjects, and can identify the intended audience by analysing textual characteristics. By Year 13, students have developed a secure analytical approach. Their tenacious, scholarly approach was demonstrated in their detailed examination of differences occurring in passages of Scripture written in Standard English and in Old Scots.
151. A particularly strong feature of teaching is the extensive detailed commentary on each piece of work assessed. Because it is so closely linked to examination grade criteria, students know how well they are working, and how they can make further improvements. As a result,

students improve their research skills and their fields of knowledge, and are becoming increasingly competent in the skills of independent enquiry. Their technique becomes more incisive, and their powers of expression more succinct. Higher-attaining students present carefully considered, properly justified arguments. However, the quality of work of lower-attaining students tends to be undermined by erratic spelling and clumsy syntax.

152. Leadership and management are very good. Since the previous inspection, and in response to students' requests, a course in English language has been established. The great majority of students who complete the AS course in Year 12 continue to A2 in Year 13. Students benefit from excellent support and monitoring, which ensure they are fully informed about their progress and their predicted grades.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

153. Standards of literacy in other subjects are good. Students speak fluently, using a wide sophisticated vocabulary. Their grasp of specific technical language is good. However, written work, which is generally of a good standard, often contains uncorrected errors in grammar and spelling.

Modern foreign languages

French

Provision in French is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is very good and enables students to achieve very well.
- Students respond positively to teachers' high expectations.
- The number of students on sixth form courses is increasing and standards are improving.

Commentary

154. In recent years, the number of students continuing their study of French beyond Year 11 has been low. As a result, meaningful comparisons with national standards cannot be made. However, recent AS and A2 results show that the achievement of students has been generally satisfactory. In 2004, A2 students reached their expected grade, while the achievement of AS students was good. Work seen during the inspection indicates that standards are now well above average and that students achieve very well.
155. Students in Year 13 speak French very competently. They express their opinions clearly and effectively. They have very good skills in pronunciation and intonation. Year 12 students are at an early stage of their AS studies, but they are learning how to debate contemporary issues and develop appropriate language. Year 13 students routinely and confidently discuss their views with their teacher and their fellow students. Written work is very good. Students write clearly and communicate effectively on a wide range of topics. They demonstrate a good knowledge of vocabulary and a sound understanding of grammatical structures. Errors tend to occur in the use of more complex language. They sustain an argument well and express mature, well thought-out views on a variety of abstract topics, including energy, crime, relationships and education.
156. The quality of teaching is very good. Teachers demonstrate very high levels of competence and confidence. The extensive, almost exclusive, use of French in lessons makes few concessions to English ears. Consequently, students have very high standards to which to aspire and they develop their listening skills very well. High expectations encourage students to give of their best. Students take part readily in discussions. They develop their views well. They have good research skills and use dictionaries and reference sources effectively to

supplement their learning. Very good relationships between students and teachers create a positive climate for learning. Because the teachers know the students' individual strengths and weaknesses, students receive valuable guidance on how they can improve. They are appreciative of the good support provided.

157. Very good leadership and management are bringing about good improvements in standards. A high level of collaboration among the three teachers ensures that the well-planned scheme of work is executed consistently. Enthusiasm and commitment motivate students to work productively. As a result, there has been very good improvement since the last inspection, when standards were below average.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Examination results are well above the national average because of very good teaching.
- Students achieve well because teachers assess their work effectively and show them how to improve.
- Good departmental leadership and management since the time of the previous inspection have ensured that above-average standards have been maintained.
- The use of ICT as a tool for teaching and learning is underdeveloped.

Commentary

158. A-level results in 2003 were above the national average. In 2004 they were well above. The range of prior attainment of students studying mathematics was broadly similar to that seen nationally in 2003 and rather better in 2004. These results therefore reflect good achievement in both years.
159. The work of Year 13 students is above average and is much improved from their own standards in Year 12. This accords with the results in the last two years and shows good achievement and progress. Year 13 students show a secure grasp of the integral calculus. They can integrate by parts and by substitution. Most are gaining a good understanding of recent work on partial fractions. Year 12 students have produced good work with quadratic equations and inequalities. They can apply the factor theorem to solving problems. One or two are still finding difficulty in stepping up from GCSE to A2 work and make algebraic slips.
160. Teaching is very good. Lessons are carefully prepared and very well presented, providing the right level of pace and challenge to meet the needs of all students. Teachers are all well qualified, know their subject well and are enthusiastic about it. Typically, lessons benefit from very good clear explanation and demonstration from which the students can learn and which they can readily understand. In a very good Year 12 lesson in mechanics, the presentation was lively and bright, with good use of coloured pens to show which vectors represented forces and which accelerations. The teacher ensured that the students were engaged and concentrating, with very good use of question and answer and with practical examples so that they enjoyed the work they were doing.
161. The marking of the students' work is thorough and very effective. At the end of each topic there is an assignment for the students to complete. This is carefully marked to examination standards so that the students are given a very clear picture of where they are and what they understand. Some teachers also give detailed model solutions to the questions they have set, which the students find very helpful indeed when they review and check through their own answers. The students feel very well supported by their teachers and know that they are free to approach them when they are in difficulties. Hence they experience the growth in confidence and in understanding that enables them to progress so well.

162. Relatively little use is made of ICT as a tool for teaching or for learning. In a lesson on the normal to a tangent to a curve, which was in many respects very good, because of lack of confidence in the reliability of the hardware, the teacher did not use the computer and data projector to show graphically what was happening, though it provided the ideal equipment to do so. Several of the students, have the skills to use ICT effectively in other subjects but do not use them in mathematics.
163. The department is well led and managed so that good standards have been maintained in almost all years since the previous inspection. The number of those taking A2 is small enough to enable them to keep in touch informally so that communication between teachers about individual students and course developments is good. The changes and refinements to the A2 programme made by the examining boards in recent years have been kept under constant review, and adjustments have been made to the programmes of study. Opportunities for the professional development of teachers new to teaching at A level have been embraced and are proving effective. Overall it is a very strong picture with the capacity to improve further.

Mathematics across the curriculum

164. In general, students' skills in mathematics are well developed. In the majority of subjects, levels of skill were good and sometimes very good. In geography, for example, students employ the Chi Squared test when considering the correlation of data and use choropleths effectively when analysing shopping traits for the population of Ledbury. In English, there is very good use of graphs and tables in research on regional language development in areas such as vowel sounds.

SCIENCE

Chemistry was the focus subject. In addition, biology and physics were sampled. In recent years, small numbers have taken A2 examinations in biology. Overall results have varied, but some students in each year have achieved the highest grade. During the early years of AS level, large numbers took the course, but relatively few achieved well and continued to A2. In 2004, the situation improved radically. Of the 15 who completed the course, eight gained higher grades (A or B) and 12 have carried on into Year 13. Physics results in A2 examinations have been lower, with varying standards but fewer higher grades. Again, there was a marked improvement in 2004. Nearly half gained a higher grade in the AS examination and most continued to A2. In both subjects, management and teaching are very good and students achieve very well.

Chemistry

Provision in chemistry is **excellent**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are consistently high and students achieve very well.
- Teaching and learning are very good.
- Leadership and management are excellent.
- Numbers opting for AS level are rising and most students go on to take A2 level.
- The technician hours available to support the subject are inadequate.

Commentary

165. Over recent years, results in A2 examinations have been consistently above or well above the national average. In 2004, for example, two-thirds of candidates obtained higher grades (A or B) and all passed. When the results are compared to performance at GCSE, they show very good achievement by both male and female students. Present Year 13 students are working at similarly high standards. Their results in AS examinations and internal tests indicate that

the results in 2005 will match those of 2004. They have a secure understanding, for example, of the difficult theory underlying the production of colour in compounds made from the transition metals.

166. Numbers taking AS level are rising; there are currently 15 students in the Year 12 class. Recent results have been consistently high, with two-thirds of candidates gaining the higher grades and very few failing. Ninety per cent of students continue on to A2 level. Present Year 12 students have made a very good start to the course and are already able to use their knowledge of the periodic table to predict the formation and properties of chlorides and oxides.
167. Teaching is always at least very good and often excellent. Teachers communicate their own enthusiasm for chemistry and are engendering abiding interest and commitment in students. Lessons are very well planned and include a variety of stimulating activities that maintain interest and enjoyment. As topics are covered, each section of work is assessed during the lesson. Students find this constant evidence of effective learning very motivating. Any misconceptions are immediately rectified by personal tuition. Relationships between teachers and students and amongst the students themselves are excellent. The very positive climate and effective groupwork add much to the quality of learning. All these features were evident in an excellent Year 12 lesson on catalysis. Use of a data projector to illustrate catalytic converters in modern cars provided a stimulating start and gave relevance to the work. This was followed by carefully structured questions that led to an increasingly sophisticated understanding of the processes. Students relished working independently, helped each other and, with judicious support from the teacher, all achieved very well.
168. Excellent leadership and management are evident in all aspects of provision. The work of the three teachers is carefully co-ordinated, so that students receive a coherent learning experience. Links between different parts of the syllabus are built in. Long-term assessment of progress and use of the data to set challenging targets and to monitor the effectiveness of learning are excellent. The choice of syllabus and teaching methodology constantly emphasise independent and active learning. As well as learning chemistry, students are gaining study skills that will be of enormous value in higher education. Morale is high; students and teachers work together sharing the determination to achieve the highest possible standards.
169. Well-qualified and dedicated technicians support students' learning. However, the hours of work available are limited and many large classes will soon be conducting course work: the technical support commonly required is greater than the school's current capacity.
170. There has been very good improvement since the last inspection. Larger numbers of students are achieving very well and teaching has improved.

HUMANITIES

Geography

Provision in geography is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards of students' work are improving; they are average and students are now achieving well.

- Good teaching and good teacher-student relationships result in these improving standards.
- Standards are enhanced by the support given to students in organising their work and developing their literacy skills and examination techniques.
- Fieldwork opportunities and extended assignments develop research and independent learning skills.
- Students have insufficient opportunities to use ICT.
- There are good assessment procedures, with joint target-setting between staff and students based on prior attainment.

Commentary

171. In 2003, examination results in A level geography were well below average. No students attained the higher grades of A and B, although everyone gained at least a grade E. Results were lower than those attained in previous years, which have been above average. There was very little difference in the results of males and females. In relation to students' standards when they began the course, the 2003 results represented unsatisfactory achievement. However, the 2004 examination results show a significant improvement, with 50 per cent of students gaining the highest grades.
172. In Year 13, students' standards are average and their achievement is good. From slightly lower prior attainment than in other sixth forms, students are becoming adept at describing and accounting for a range of human and physical systems, processes and patterns. They are developing well the skills of independent study, researching global features such as wilderness environments, feeding the world's people, and development and disparity. In undertaking this work and also during fieldwork, they have learnt to identify, select and collect evidence from a range of sources, to evaluate it and draw well-reasoned conclusions. However, there are still insufficient opportunities to use ICT to further develop these skills.
173. Teaching and learning are good. Teachers know students well and establish very good relationships. They have good subject knowledge, which is well used to illustrate lessons with topical material. Teachers set clear objectives at the start of lessons, are generous with their praise and demonstrate a good sense of humour and give clear advice to students as to how to organise their work. There is now a strong emphasis on the development of geographical vocabulary and general literacy skills, which has a significant impact on examination success. Lessons proceed with a good pace and embody a good range of teaching techniques. Pair and group work aid the development of oral skills. Teachers make good use of coursework and homework to extend students' thinking and to encourage them to take responsibility for their learning. Nevertheless, students still show a great deal of dependence on their teachers, both for where to find information and how to present it.
174. Leadership and management are good. There is a strong focus on raising standards and the two teachers of geography work very well as a team. The head of department sets high expectations and the two teachers are clear about their roles and are responsible for specific areas of learning within a common agreed framework. Target-setting and the monitoring of achievement are well established for individual students, based firmly on their prior attainment, and this is one reason why underachievement in geography has now been eliminated. Improvement since the last inspection has been good.

History

Provision in history is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching in Year 13 encourages students to analyse and debate what they learn.
- Discursive and evaluative essays enable students to develop their skills of analysis and strengthen their understanding of the periods studied.

- The development of mind maps and the use of PowerPoint technology is supporting the confidence and understanding of the students.
- Where teaching relies on the teacher's exposition, students become passive and dependent.
- The quality of the students' lesson preparation is not monitored and so is variable.
- Enrichment through the experiences of conferences and lectures is underdeveloped.

Commentary

175. Standards in Year 13 are satisfactory. Over the last three years, A2 results have represented satisfactory achievement. Current students are progressing well in class given their prior attainment. They are well motivated and gaining a good overview of the periods studied. They are encouraged to analyse events and their discussions on 'Cold War' politics demonstrate understanding of the tensions between the ideologies of the West and the USSR. They identify a range of motives and can make reasonable hypotheses about the reactions of the world leaders. Opinions tend to become stereotypical at times, but discussion between students can result in more reasoned judgements. Students use sources confidently and recognise the need to compare and contrast them in order to assess their value to the historian. Essay titles encourage students to be discursive and to evaluate what they learn. Essays written by higher-attaining students are fluent and well organised, demonstrating clear understanding of the issue under review. Those of lower-attaining students reflect weaker organisational and literacy skills.
176. The quality of teaching and learning is very good. Students are encouraged to discuss, hypothesise and debate, which stimulates enquiry and enables them to achieve well. Oral discussion and groupwork supports the growth of their confidence so that they make good progress across their sixth-form years. Teachers ensure that students are supported by prepared information sheets that enable them to concentrate on the analysis of the lesson content rather than just noting it. The development of mind maps and the use of PowerPoint technology to clarify teaching points and provide lesson reviews are supporting the confidence and understanding of the students. Course overview sheets provide very good information about key questions and the required reading. This enables students to prepare for lessons, increasing their effectiveness. The quality of this preparation is not yet monitored, however, and varies greatly. Achievement is occasionally reduced where teacher's exposition is overlong, and questions to students are perfunctory and lack challenge. They then become passive, and dependent on the teacher.
177. There is new leadership of the department and the introduction of further developments is in hand. The syllabus has been changed so as to reflect prior learning in the main school. New assessment procedures are being developed that will enable students to become more confident in their recognition and use of the criteria for success. Enrichment through the experiences of conferences and lectures is underdeveloped. Despite recent problems in staffing, progress has been maintained. There is a clear commitment to achievement by teachers who are well led. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

Performance studies

Provision in performance studies is **excellent**.

178. In Years 12 and 13, there are AS and A2 courses in dance, drama, music and music technology. All of them are highly successful in their own right, representing some of the best examination results in the school over recent years. Their integration provides the basis for the spectacular musical and theatrical productions, which involve large numbers of pupils and students giving up their own time. The most recent and highly successful production was *West Side Story*, the latest in a long and diverse line of school performances. The rigorous study necessary for results that are well above average in all three subjects indicates that the school takes very seriously such performances.
179. The effect of performing arts pervades the work of the school: in a science lesson on electromagnetic induction, pupils made up the lyrics to a song to reinforce their learning about galvanometers; pupils listen to, sing and work to French and German music in the language lessons; and all English lessons have a silent-reading session where pupils and students listen to music as they work.
180. However, the school does not provide a post-16 course that builds on and integrates these three elements for successful GCSE candidates.

Dance

Provision for dance is **excellent**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are very high indeed.
- The quality of teaching is very good.
- Students work very hard.
- Leadership and management are excellent.

Commentary

181. Results in the recent AS and A2 examinations were very high indeed and are matched by current standards in Year 13. The very good quality of teaching and the expectation that students will work as hard as they possibly can is a powerful combination, which produces very positive attitudes in the students. This is how the department gains its results. Teachers have excellent subject knowledge and an absolute determination that they will get the best out of their students. The lesson planning and corresponding assessment systems are excellent as they ensure that all students are working to the absolute limit of their abilities.
182. Students work very hard, particularly on the analysis of different styles of choreography and their effects; the need for a very wide base of knowledge is an integral part of the course and teachers help students to organise their research and to use their time wisely. As a result, the students are very efficient learners, and work very well as a group. They all analyse each other's work and all offer and accept positive criticism. Achievement is very good.
183. Leadership and management of this new department are excellent, with a very clear vision for what dance can do for very many students. Numbers are growing at AS and A2 as the department becomes more established and more successful, though this is happening against a trend of many students leaving the school to study elsewhere. The attention to detail and the breadth and range of experiences offered through the excellent extra-curricular opportunities are clear illustrations of the determination and far-sightedness in the department.

184. It is not possible to comment on improvements in the department as no dance courses were running at the time of the last inspection.

Drama

Provision in drama is **excellent**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are well above average.
- Leadership and management are very good.
- The quality of teaching is very good.
- Students are efficient learners.

Commentary

185. Recent results are well above average in both AS and A2 examinations.

186. The teaching is consistently very good so that students make very good progress. They are regularly assessed in their progress towards dramatic and examination success and they have learned to give and take positive criticism to aid their development. Students learn very well. They trust each other, which makes group discussions quick and effective. In their own work on 'Christmas Day in a dysfunctional and unhappy household', they rapidly decided on a scenario where the stance in the kitchen of the hard-pressed wife achieved a teeth-clenching accuracy of observation and acting. As a result, levels of attainment are well above average.

187. The extra-curricular provision gives a very wide range of opportunities for students to enhance and extend their learning, particularly as it usually involves work with both dance and drama departments so that students increase their understanding of how these performance areas can best be integrated.

188. The leadership and management of the department are very good. There has been excellent improvement since the last inspection, illustrated by the improvement in teaching and in the increasingly impressive results.

Music

Provision in music is **excellent**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The above-average results in the 2004 AS examination indicate an improving trend in post-16 standards.
- Teaching is very good overall.
- Students learn and achieve very well.
- Students take an active part in the musical life of the department.

Commentary

189. The very small group of students which took A2 last summer gained results that were below average, though the larger group taking AS showed above-average results. These students are currently in Year 13 and are already working at above-average standards. Current Year 12 students are also producing work on their AS course which is above average. This is because they are rigorously taught and properly trained in examination technique. They also have a very wide musical experience from which to draw in their compositions and performance analysis. In their work on the comparison between performances of Albinoni's Oboe concerto,

they all showed considerable insight into the possibilities of the music, together with a very astute awareness of the principles and practice of essay writing.

190. Teaching is extremely well informed and aimed specifically at individuals' strengths and abilities. For instance, some pupils are not used to writing for voice or drums, so lessons were specifically aimed at helping with those two areas by playing William Walton's 'Façade' and by showing the drum writers the drum parts for the 'Muppets' Theme'. Assessment procedures have improved recently so that students know the level at which they work and what they need to do to improve. As a result of this, they learn well and make good progress. Very good use is made of the excellent ICT provision, particularly for composition.
191. Students are considerably helped by the expectation that they will be a significant and helpful part of the department's work, and they learn by helping others – for instance, taking the rehearsal of the flute choir, helping the visiting Year 6 pupils make their music for salsa and then creating a dance to go with it and playing in the junior orchestra to give some depth and security to the beginners as they struggle with orchestral technique.
192. The leadership and management of the department are excellent. Very good improvements have been made since the last inspection in the quality of teaching, in the establishment of excellent assessment systems tied directly to the examination work and a widening of the curriculum with the introduction of the first year of a music technology A level. The links with the departments of dance and drama are very strong, which is a significant benefit for those who take more than one performing arts subject at sixth-form level.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

Physical education

Provision in physical education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve well.
- The examination curriculum is well developed.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge and teach at appropriate levels.
- Accommodation is new, but some teaching rooms are small.

Commentary

193. Pupils on examination courses achieve well in terms of their predicted grades. In 2004, eight pupils took A2 level and all passed, with two gaining good passes. Written coursework indicates that students are working at appropriate levels and that teachers' expectations of them are high. Homework is used to consolidate topics covered but rarely to anticipate forthcoming topics and encourage research. Year 12 students following the BTEC course are working well and their coursework contains good use of ICT.
194. When given opportunities to discuss issues, most students, both boys and girls, do so enthusiastically. The great majority can make perceptive contributions. In two lessons observed, one about cardio-vascular exercise and another about providing feedback to performers, students made high-quality oral contributions. In these lessons, progress and achievement were both good. Teachers skilfully managed discussions to elicit and develop information while at the same time giving students responsibility for their own learning. In most theory lessons, links between practical and theoretical aspects of the subject are clearly forged.
195. Teaching is good. Great care is taken over lesson preparation and in the identification of the learning objectives and outcomes. Predicted examination grades are generally accurate and help teachers pitch levels of challenge for students reliably. Very good relationships between

teachers and students are helpful in developing students' knowledge and their positive attitudes to the subject. Marking is up to date and sufficiently detailed to help pupils to improve their standards.

196. There is no basic timetable of physical education for the sixth form, but for students on examination courses, the curriculum is good. Courses are running at both AS and A2 levels and opportunities are provided for students to acquire vocational qualifications. The department intends to further develop this choice of vocational courses. Lessons are taught in pleasant new classrooms but some of these are too small. There is no designated teaching room for the subject and this causes problems for teachers. Access to computers and the Internet is not easy. However, exercise machines in the fitness suite are computerised and this is very helpful when physiological and biomechanical aspects of exercise are being studied.
197. Improvement since the previous inspection has been satisfactory.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgement</i>	<i>Sixth form grade</i>	<i>School grade</i>
The overall effectiveness of the sixth form and the school	3	3
How inclusive the school is		1
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	2	3
Cost effectiveness of the sixth form/value for money provided by the school	4	3
Overall standards achieved		3
Pupils' achievement	3	3
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities		2
Attendance	4	4
Attitudes	2	2
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	2	2
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development		2
The quality of education provided by the school		2
The quality of teaching	2	2
How well pupils learn	2	2
The quality of assessment	2	3
How well the curriculum meets pupils' needs	3	3
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities		1
Accommodation and resources	2	5
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety		2
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	2	3
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	2	3
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents		3
The quality of the school's links with the community	1	1
The school's links with other schools and colleges	3	2
The leadership and management of the school		2
The governance of the school	2	2
The leadership of the headteacher		2
The leadership of other key staff	2	3
The effectiveness of management	2	3

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