

INSPECTION REPORT

LADY MANNERS SCHOOL

Bakewell

LEA area: Derbyshire

Unique reference number: 112996

Headteacher: Mary Sellers

Lead inspector: Robin Coulthard

Dates of inspection: 28th February – 4th March 2005

Inspection number: 268844

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

© Crown copyright 2005

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

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

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Comprehensive
School category: Foundation
Age range of students: 11 - 18
Gender of students: Mixed
Number on roll: 1458

School address: Shutts Lane
Bakewell
Derbyshire
Postcode: DE45 1JA

Telephone number: 01629 812671
Fax number: 01629 814984
E-mail address: secretary@ladymanners.derbyshire.sch.uk
Appropriate authority: The governing body
Name of chair of governors: Mr D Coe

Date of previous inspection: 26th April 1999

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Lady Manners is a large secondary school with a much bigger than usual sixth form. It is a very popular school serving Bakewell and the surrounding rural area. It draws students from over 35 primary schools. Students' economic circumstances are in the main favourable compared with the national picture, although pockets of deprivation have grown locally in recent years. Numbers known to be eligible for free school meals are well below the national average but have doubled since the last inspection. The attainment of students as they come into Year 7 is above average in English, mathematics and science, average in other subjects and above average overall. No students speak English as a second language and very few students are of other than White-British origin.

The school has gained the following awards: Healthy Schools, Sportsmark (silver award) with distinction, and takes part in the following initiatives: Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme, Young Enterprise, 14-19 Pathfinder, Enterprise Pathfinder. Increasing links over curricular provision are being developed with the Peak 11 federation of Derbyshire schools, Chesterfield College, the Dales Agriculture and Rural Training organisation (DART) and Sheffield Hallam University.

The student population is stable with very few joining or leaving part-way through the year. The percentage of students with special educational needs is two thirds of the national average, but 45 students have statements of special educational need which is above the average proportion. Students' needs relate mainly to moderate learning difficulties, physical disability, hearing impairment and behavioural disorders.

A substantial building programme is underway to improve accommodation for the sixth form and for sport.

Very few students do not continue in education post-16. A very large proportion of sixth form students continue into higher education after Year 13. Very few students fail to complete their sixth form courses. Students' attainment on entry to the sixth form is above the national average.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities	
			Main school	Sixth form
11746	Robin Coulthard	Lead inspector		
19653	Libby Dickson	Lay inspector		
32312	Peter Johnson	Team inspector	English	English
28199	Peter Lawley	Team inspector		Psychology
32661	Gaynor Hartle	Team inspector	Mathematics	Mathematics
4922	Mike Driver	Team inspector	Science	Chemistry
32231	Adrian Lyons	Team inspector	Information and communication technology Business studies	Business studies
32329	Andrew Stafford	Team inspector	Art and design	Art and design
32590	Roger Fenwick	Team inspector	Design and technology	Design and technology
31192	John Stewart	Team inspector	Geography	
18663	Phil Burchell	Team inspector	History	Geography History
34089	Robin Gaff	Team inspector	Modern languages foreign	French
25377	Lorna Brown	Team inspector	Music	Music
30600	Betty Colley	Team inspector	Physical education	Physical education
31372	Bob Hardwick	Team inspector	Religious education	Religious education
32208	Derek Aitken	Team inspector	Citizenship	
21765	Patricia Potheary	Team inspector	Special needs educational education Vocational	

The inspection contractor was:

e-Qualitas Limited

Langshaw
Pastens Lane
Limpsfield Chart
Oxted
Surrey
RH8 0RE

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

REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT	6
PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE MAIN INSPECTION FINDINGS	
STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY STUDENTS	10
Standards achieved in subjects and courses	
Students' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	
QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL	13
Teaching and learning	
The curriculum	
Care, guidance and support	
Partnership with parents, other schools and the community	
LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT	20
OTHER SPECIFIED FEATURES	22
PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES	23
SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 AND 4	
SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM	
PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS	58

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

Lady Manners provides its students with an excellent education. Standards are high and students achieve very well as a result of teaching that is very good in the main school and excellent in the sixth form. The leadership team work reflectively and purposefully together to establish a school community where the students work hard and harmoniously. They are keen to succeed in their academic work and in the outstanding range of enrichment activities that is available to enhance their personal development. The school provides very good value for money.

The school's main strengths are

- Students over the whole range of attainment are suitably challenged by very stimulating teaching
- Relationships amongst students and with staff are very good and students' personal development is very good
- An outstanding range of extra-curricular activities contributes significantly to students' learning and to their social and cultural development
- Students receive excellent support and guidance from staff, including particularly helpful careers guidance
- Excellent links with the community and other schools benefit the curriculum and students' personal development
- Leadership and management are excellent and the leadership of the headteacher is outstanding

Improvement since the last inspection has been very good. The strengths previously reported have been sustained. Standards have been maintained at their previous very good level. Teaching and learning have improved and the overall quality of provision is better. Provision for information and communication technology (ICT) is considerably improved and now meets statutory requirements. The school now analyses data very thoroughly to guide planning and measure the value it adds to students' achievement during their time in the school.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Performance compared with:		all schools			similar schools
		2002	2003	2004	2004
Year 11	GCSE/GNVQ examinations	A	A	A	B
Year 13	A/AS level and VCE examinations	A	A	A	

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 students attained similarly at the end of Year 9.

Students' achievement is very good in the main school and excellent in the sixth form. Students enter the school in Year 7 with above-average attainment. In national tests at the end of Year 9, their results are well above the national average, as are GCSE results. Boys' and girls' results differ by a similar amount to that reported nationally. Work seen during the inspection was well above average in the main school and the sixth form. Students with special needs are very well supported and their achievement is very good.

Students' personal qualities, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are very good. Behaviour is very good, with very few examples of challenging behaviour. Students work hard and have very positive attitudes to work and to

the many opportunities the school offers. Attendance is above average and punctuality is very good.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education is excellent in the main school and in the sixth form, where the quality of teaching is more consistently high. The curriculum provides a wide range of challenging opportunities for learning, supplemented by very wide opportunities for additional activities, amongst which, sport and music are especially strong. Gifted and talented students and students with special educational needs are very well provided for. The range of vocational courses is being extended to respond to the changing needs of the intake. Excellent support, advice and guidance are provided for students as they move through the school. The school provides excellent opportunities to seek students' views about their work and personal development and students are involved very well in school life and decision-making. Links with parents are very good and they are kept very well informed. Links with the community and other schools are excellent. The match of staff to the needs of the curriculum is very good. Accommodation is satisfactory and currently being improved. Resources are good.

Teaching and learning are very good in the main school and excellent in the sixth form. Relationships in lessons are cordial and very productive. Teachers readily share their enthusiasm and expertise with students. Lessons are carefully planned to meet the full range of need within each group. Interest and momentum are preserved in lessons by the use of a good range of teaching methods, including valuable opportunities for individual and group working. Language skills are very well developed. Time is used efficiently. Homework effectively reinforces and extends work done in class and provides valuable scope for students to develop further their independent learning skills. Assessment and marking are very constructive and feedback gives students clear ideas for improvement.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are excellent. The leadership of the headteacher is outstanding. Senior managers work very well as a team. They constantly reflect on current performance and have a very thorough knowledge of what the school needs to do to develop further. Day-to-day management is smooth, very efficient and closely focused on maintaining a stimulating climate for learning. Governors are very knowledgeable about the school. They provide the management with suitable challenge and advice. The range of professional expertise amongst governors results in very well-informed support for individual initiatives, such as the current building programme.

PARENTS' AND STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents' views of the school are very positive. They consider that their children like school, work hard, are well taught and helped to become mature. They think the school could seek the views of parents more. The inspectors agreed with the positive points and consider that the school is very accessible to parents and welcomes their views. Students are very supportive of the school. They appreciate that they are well taught and that teachers have high expectations of them. Their work is helpfully assessed. They consider that behaviour is good and that the school is well run.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

No significant areas for improvement were identified, but to meet statutory requirements, the school should

- Introduce daily collective worship for all students

THE SIXTH FORM

OVERALL EVALUATION

The school has an excellent sixth form. Students' learning and achievement are excellent as a result of excellent teaching. Examination results are well above average. A very good range of academic courses suits students' ambitions well. Worthwhile initiatives are being developed to broaden the range of vocational subjects, including some provided by other schools and colleges. An outstanding range of extra-curricular activities is provided that significantly benefits students' social and cultural development. Very good opportunities exist for students to exercise responsibility for the benefit of younger students. Personal and academic guidance and support are excellent. Students are mature and responsible; they are very keen to do well and they respect the trust and freedom they enjoy. The sixth form is very effectively led and managed and provides very good value for money.

The main strengths are

- Standards and results that are consistently well above the national average as a result of excellent teaching
- A wide range of academic courses supplemented by outstanding extra-curricular provision
- An excellent climate for learning resulting from the dedication of the teachers, excellent relationships and highly motivated students
- Strong and reflective leadership and very effective management

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	Excellent in English literature; good in French
Mathematics	Excellent
Science	Very good in chemistry
ICT	Not inspected in the sixth form
Humanities	Excellent in geography and very good in history; good in psychology and very good in religious education
Engineering, technology and manufacturing	Very good in product design
Visual and performing arts and media	Very good in art and design and excellent in music
Hospitality, sports, leisure and travel	Excellent in sports science
Business	Very good in business studies
General education	Not inspected in the sixth form

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

ADVICE, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

The provisions made to guide students as they join, move through and leave the sixth form are excellent. Their progress is carefully monitored. Teachers and management staff know them very well, provide strong support and encourage the setting of challenging academic targets. Students' views are sought and seriously considered. Guidance on further study is excellent.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE SIXTH FORM

Leadership and management of the sixth form are excellent. Leadership is aware of national developments, of the gradually changing nature of the sixth form, and of the increasing value of collaboration with other providers of education. The sixth form is sensitively led in a way that provides exceptionally well for students' current needs and for the important role of preparing them for the next stages of their education and training. The distinctive sixth form management expects students to become increasingly responsible for their personal organisation and allows them by Year 13 considerable freedom, which they value and respect as an important stage of transition from school to university life, for which almost all are preparing.

STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Students' views of the school are very positive. They enjoy school and acknowledge that it is a harmonious community. They consider that they are very well taught. They recognise that staff are expert in their subjects, and generous in the time they give to help individual students and to provide the exceptional range of additional activities. Advice over the next stages in their education is very helpful. They think the school is well run and that they are helped to become mature and independent.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY STUDENTS

Standards achieved in subjects and courses

Results in national examinations are well above average. Current standards in Year 9 are well above average and students are achieving very well. Gifted students achieve very well. Students with special educational needs achieve very well, particularly in core subjects, where they receive carefully targeted help from support staff. In Year 11, students achieve very well. Current standards in most subjects, including English, mathematics and science, are well above average.

Main strengths

- Results in national tests at the end of Year 9, in 2003, were well above average
- GCSE results in 2004 were well above average
- Standards in Years 9 and 11 are well above average and students' achievement is very good
- Students with special educational needs achieve very well overall and particularly successfully in literacy and numeracy

Commentary

Standards in national tests at the end of Year 9 – average point scores in 2004

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	35.2 (35.7)	n/a (33.4)
mathematics	39.5 (39.4)	35.6 (35.4)
science	37.5 (37.5)	33.2 (33.6)

There were 223 students in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year (2003).

1. Results in national tests in English, mathematics and science at the end of Year 9 in 2004 were well above the national average. Results were slightly higher in mathematics and science than in the previous year, but slightly lower in English. The school achieved its challenging targets for the proportion of students reaching level 5 in English in 2004, and exceeded its targets in mathematics and science. The trend in results was upward between 2000 and 2004, in common with the national picture.
2. Current standards in Year 9 are well above average in mathematics, science, design and technology, geography, history, music and religious education. Standards are above average in English, art and design, modern foreign languages, information and communication technology (ICT) and citizenship, and average in physical education. Overall, students achieve very well from their starting points in the school.

Standards in GCSE/GNVQ examinations at the end of Year 11 in 2004

	School results	National results
Percentage of students gaining 5 or more A*-C grades	74 (72)	52 (52)
Percentage of students gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	94 (97)	89 (88)
Percentage of students gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	97 (100)	96 (96)
Average point score per student (best eight subjects)	334.5	282.8

There were 239 students in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

3. Standards at GCSE are well above the national average for students gaining five or more passes at A* to C. Results are above average for schools whose students had gained

similar results at the end of Year 9 in 2002. Compared with all schools, Lady Manners does very well for its students in terms of value added between the end of Year 6 and Year 11. Students' achievement is very good during Years 10 and 11. Standards seen in those years were well above average almost across the board.

4. Students who are gifted and talented achieve very well because work is carefully targeted to fulfil their needs.
5. Students with special educational needs achieve very well overall. They improve significantly in their reading, writing, spelling and mathematics and are able to be successful in a wide range of subjects. The gains in reading particularly are outstanding, due largely to the skill and dedication of the learning support staff. By the time they leave school, students with special educational needs leave with very good qualifications, including GCSE, entry level GCSE and vocational qualifications.
6. Achievement for students with special educational needs in mainstream subjects is very good.

Sixth form

Standards are well above average and students' achievement is excellent.

Main strengths

- Current standards are particularly high in music and sports studies
- Achievement is excellent in English literature, mathematics, music and sports studies

Commentary

Standards in GCE A/AS level and VCE examinations at the end of Year 13 in 2004

	School results	National results
Percentage of entries gaining A-E grades	96.4 (97.4)	92.4 (92.3)
Percentage of entries gaining A-B grades	46.6 (49.5)	36.2 (35.6)
Average point score per student	83.2 (85.5)	75.0 (74.6)

There were 158 students in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

7. Achievement in the sixth form is excellent as a result of the excellent teaching and students' eagerness to learn. Boys and girls gain results that are well above the national average, and they have remained so in recent years. From work seen in the thirteen subjects inspected in full, standards are very high in physical education and music. Standards are well above course expectations in English literature, mathematics, chemistry, geography, religious education and business studies. Standards are above average in French, history, art and design, design and technology and psychology.

Students' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Students' attitudes and behaviour are very good throughout the school, and provide a firm foundation for their success in learning and as a result they make a significant contribution to students' achievement.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students work hard, behave very well and have very positive attitudes to the many opportunities the school offers
- Relationships amongst students and between staff and students are very good
- A small minority of students lose concentration in lessons when the teaching does not hold their interest
- Overall, the strategies for students' personal development are very good, with particular strengths in moral and social development

- There are efficient systems for monitoring attendance and punctuality. Attendance is above average and punctuality is very good
- Students exhibit excellent attitudes and behaviour and are impressive role models for younger students

Commentary

8. Students are very positive about the school and what it has to offer. They like the friendly atmosphere and speak highly of their teachers and feel that teachers give them the help they need. Almost all students are keen to work hard and achieve their best. They come to school ready to apply themselves and are prepared to listen and learn, from each other, as well as from their teachers. They respond eagerly to questions and welcome opportunities for independent learning. Relationships are very good at all levels, and many lessons are characterised by positive and supportive interactions between staff and students and amongst students themselves. Beyond lessons, a large number of students value the wide range of extra-curricular activities which teachers run.
9. In class, at assemblies and around the school, student behaviour is very good, especially given the constraints imposed by narrow corridors and the lack of space indoors for students to socialise. Most students move around the buildings sensibly and show consideration for visitors. Although movement along corridors and stairways sometimes appears hectic, it is not disorderly.
10. Students with special educational needs are very well behaved and mature in their relationships, because they feel valued and successful within the school community.
11. In nearly all lessons, behaviour is very good because students are well motivated, and their attention and interest are captured and held by good and very good teaching. However, in classes where the pace is too slow or the expectations are too low, a few students become chatty and this can disturb others.
12. In the main, the strategies for improving behaviour are effective, and contribute significantly to ensuring that students learn well. A range of measures is used, including praise and rewards - which include bronze, silver and gold awards - as well as sanctions. The process of referral to a duty teacher is very effective in tackling misbehaviour. Bullying is rare; students and their parents are confident that incidents are handled well when they do occur.
13. The school provides a very good range of opportunities for social and personal development, not only through the curriculum and the general life of the school, but also through an exceptional range of activities in sport, the arts, voluntary work and visits, in this country and abroad.
14. Students are encouraged to take on responsibilities as school councillors, form prefects and librarians. The year and school councils provide effective forums to ensure their views are aired and taken seriously. Students say the school listens to and acts on their suggestions, for example by allowing them to bring bottles of water into lessons.
15. Students are heavily involved in charity work, further evidence of the school's commitment to foster moral and social awareness. The school's strong ethos ensures that the difference between right and wrong is clearly understood. This is made particularly clear in personal and social education lessons, where moral issues are considered and discussed.
16. The history, geography, religious education and music departments make an especially strong contribution to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. For example, religious education includes the study of all the major world religions, and gives students an awareness of other people's beliefs, as well as the chance to develop an understanding of ethical issues such as euthanasia, conscience and world poverty and the arguments for and against nuclear weapons. Cultural development is well catered for.

Language exchanges, theatre and gallery visits are part of the regular diet of cultural activities on offer.

17. The school does not provide a daily act of collective worship for all students. However, the weekly assemblies are of high quality and support moral and social development well.
18. Attendance figures for the past academic year show an improvement over the previous three years, and are now above the national average. Unauthorised absence is consistently lower than the national average. Punctuality is very good. Students are generally late for school only if their bus arrives late.

Sixth form

Students' attitudes are excellent and their personal qualities develop extremely well.

Main strengths

- Students' excellent attitudes and motivation result in a very effective climate for learning
- The school provides excellent support for students in their learning and general development

Commentary

19. Sixth formers enjoy being at school and find the work interesting and challenging. Most have high aspirations and know they must work hard to achieve what they want. The rate of course completion is high, showing a strong commitment to their studies. Their successful relationships with teachers are built on trust and respect, creating an extremely successful climate for teaching and learning. Many students spoke glowingly about the help and support given by teachers, who were prepared to devote extra time and effort to help them succeed in their studies and fulfil their ambitions. One student commented, 'Teachers here do a lot more than they have to'.
20. The school pays close and very effective attention to the personal development of students. In the words of one student, 'This school encourages people to become really confident'. All students, including those joining from other schools, are encouraged and expected to become leaders and role models, and the school values their support and involvement. Students are involved in setting personal targets and good opportunities occur in most lessons for them to express their views.
21. Opportunities are provided for students to take on extensive responsibilities, which they take very seriously, including helping younger students in a wide range of classes. The Community Sports Leadership Award scheme widens this leadership role to include primary schools. They make a significant contribution to the development of younger students by acting as house captains and prefects, as 'buddy counsellors', or giving support in lessons. There are further opportunities for them to become involved through participating in musical events, organising the Christmas bazaar and other charity events, and leading assemblies. Sixth formers are polite, friendly and helpful to visitors and they are impressive role models for the younger students. Attendance is good and punctuality is very good.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The school provides an excellent education. Teaching and learning are very good in Years 7 to 11 and excellent in the sixth form. The curriculum is very good and extra-curricular provision is outstanding. Staffing is very good. Resources and accommodation are satisfactory.

Teaching and learning

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is very good in all years
- Teachers have very good subject knowledge and communicate their enthusiasm very effectively to students
- Students are naturally keen to learn; their behaviour is very good
- Planning provides very well for the learning needs of students over the whole range of ability and need
- Students with special educational needs make particularly good progress where they receive help from teaching assistants
- The school makes very good use of data from assessment to guide students' subsequent learning
- Regular access to computers is difficult in some subjects

Commentary

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 126 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
11 (9%)	48 (38%)	48 (38%)	18 (14%)	1 (1%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)

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

22. The school has developed the effectiveness of teaching very well since the last inspection, when it was already noted as a strength. The good practice contained in the various national strategies has been introduced and embedded into everyday routines. Departments have adopted common principles of planning. As a result, similar strengths are common to the teaching in all subjects, with no subject making less than good overall provision. The ethos for learning is very strong. Teaching was very good overall in Years 7 to 9 and very good almost across the board in Years 10 and 11. Such provision leads to very good learning because students know what is expected of them. They value the quality of the teaching and are keen to do well.
23. Relationships are very productive. Many lessons seen were very enjoyable. Teachers communicate their enthusiasm very well and students respond with genuine interest in what they learn. Oral skills are very well developed. Teachers use searching questioning to develop and check students' understanding. Students respond by attentive listening and thoughtful participation in discussion and question-and-answer sessions. Students behave very well. Very little challenging behaviour impinged on the success of any lessons during the inspection.
24. Planning is very good. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and they have a detailed knowledge both of examination requirements and of the capabilities and learning needs of their students. Lessons begin with brisk starter activities linked to the main tasks to follow. This establishes a very good pace of learning and focuses the attention of the class very well. Tasks and resources are tailored to suit the learning needs of all students. Teachers are aware of, and provide very well for, those students who are gifted and talented. Resources are of high quality. Time is rigorously apportioned to tasks to ensure that students work efficiently. The very good range of teaching methods used includes whole-class teaching, paired and other group work and individual work. This maintains interest for students, it develops and uses social skills, and encourages students to develop independence. A characteristic of many lessons was the self-imposed silence that students adopted because they were keen to achieve good results.
25. Homework is an integral part of students' learning. Relevant homework set in very good time in the lesson provides students with valuable opportunities for developing their independent learning skills and for research. Provision for ICT in the school day is satisfactory across the curriculum and has improved since the last inspection. Accessibility

of computers continues to be a problem but it will be improved by the current building programme.

26. Students with special educational needs are very well taught. Work is planned very well to help individual students build upon earlier learning at a pace to suit their needs. Teaching assistants in a good range of mainstream lessons contribute substantially to the very good achievements being made through skilled support. The quality of teaching in the learning support base is highly effective because teachers devise clear and appropriate learning objectives that take into account the detailed knowledge they have of the individual students.
27. Teachers' assessment of the quality of students' work is very good, overall. Written work is marked regularly, and teachers generally add constructive comments to enable students to know how to improve their work. Teachers give students very clear oral feedback to let them know how well they are doing. This was noted as a strength especially in history and geography. In art and design and technology, teachers make very good use of examination criteria to give written feedback to students, who can learn from the advice given. Throughout the school, departments make very good use of regular, assessed pieces of work and tests that enable students to know the standard of their work. The school uses data very well to identify students that are not achieving well and provides subject teachers with the information so that the students can receive suitable support. The very good use of data analysis to guide subsequent planning was a clear strength in science.

Sixth form

Teaching and learning in the sixth form are excellent.

Main strengths

- Teachers have excellent subject knowledge
- Students are highly motivated
- Courses are closely geared to examination requirements
- Teaching styles prepare students very well for independent learning in higher education
- Students' progress is closely checked so that individual support can be given where it is needed

Commentary

28. Teaching and learning were very good or excellent in a substantial proportion of lessons inspected in the sixth form. Teaching was excellent in English literature, mathematics, design and technology, music and sports studies.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 50 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
14 (28%)	21 (42%)	15 (30%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)

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

29. Students enjoy mature and productive working relationships with their teachers. Teachers have excellent subject expertise, which students acknowledge and value. Lessons are very well planned and challenging. Students are highly motivated and readily respond to the teachers' very high expectations. They are encouraged to develop high levels of responsibility and independence in the course of the sixth form. Teachers adopt a tutorial style of teaching to enable them to receive a high level of individual attention and to prepare students for what they will encounter in higher education. This style of teaching and learning is an important aspect of the sixth form philosophy whereby students are gradually allowed greater freedom and trust and accept a high level of responsibility for their learning.
30. Courses are closely geared to examination requirements. Assessment in the sixth form is very good. Students' progress and achievement are tracked very well as part of an excellent system of monitoring and support. The school makes very thorough use of data on individual students to predict their examination grades and help them to achieve their potential. Work is marked very thoroughly.

The curriculum

The curriculum provides a suitably wide and challenging range of learning opportunities for all students. It features an outstanding diversity of enrichment and extra-curricular activities. Staff are very well qualified for their responsibilities. The accommodation and resources for learning are satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- An excellent range of enrichment and extra-curricular activities is provided
- Planning to familiarise students with the world of work and to support them in careers education is excellent
- Provision for a daily act of collective worship is unsatisfactory
- Students with special educational needs have very good access to a wide range of courses

Commentary

31. The school provides a very good broad and balanced curriculum for all students, which also ensures that all students are directed to something they will succeed in. The requirements of the National Curriculum are fully met in Years 7 to 11. Statutory requirements for religious education are fully met, although a daily act of collective worship is not provided due to lack of suitable accommodation. Nevertheless, all students experience a regular and meaningful act of worship. On entry to the school, the curriculum takes into account the previous experiences of students so that they enjoy good continuity of learning, based on well-informed teacher knowledge of their experiences in their previous schools. A choice of French or German is offered in the first three years, with the opportunity for some students to specialise in languages by studying both languages in Years 9, 10 and 11. Art, religious education and design and technology offer particularly wide ranges of experiences through very imaginative schemes of work. A very strong feature of the school's curriculum is the

way in which both art and design and technology together offer a very large and complementary range of experiences and skills, including the opportunity for students to broaden their studies in design and technology courses in Year 9.

32. The 14 to 19 curriculum is being extended in response to the changing needs of a small proportion of the school's intake. The school has taken valuable initial steps towards offering a wider range of vocational options and recognises the need to develop further options, sometimes in conjunction with other providers. The school provides a range of very suitable and well-run courses, such as agriculture, catering, health and fitness and hairdressing, which are valued by the students. Motor mechanics and a Prince's Trust course will be available from this September.
33. The curriculum for students with special educational needs is very good. A learning support base provides high quality, accredited basic skills courses in literacy and numeracy, which help students to be fully included and succeed in their other lessons. For example, about 70 students benefit from practising their spelling intensively for half an hour on three mornings each week. Skilled and experienced teaching assistants provide support in mainstream lessons so that students keep up and gain good qualifications by the end of Year 11. In Years 10 and 11, students with special educational needs have a sound choice of options, which include the school's vocational programme, leading to national vocational qualifications. Students with learning difficulties may replace one examination subject with additional help in the learning support base with GCSE and other courses. A small group of students with the most complex difficulties receive half of their timetable in a special class, where the subjects and courses are adapted very well to meet their needs more fully and intensive teaching and support are provided.
34. The school's PEG (Personal Education and Guidance) programme provides very good, broad provision for students' personal and social education. It is detailed, comprehensive and suitably challenging for each year group. In all years, well-planned lessons place a strong focus on key words to assist students' understanding and development. Planning to familiarise students with the world of work and to support them in careers education is excellent. All aspects are covered, although sex and relationships education could be further developed.
35. The school offers an outstanding range of enrichment and extra-curricular activities. Educational visits, including field trips, are organised in all subjects. Students benefit from overseas exchanges in languages. A very wide range of clubs and societies meet at lunch time or after school. Students benefit from first-rate musical opportunities to play in an exceptional range of instrumental and choral ensembles, which are rehearsed to very high standards. In some activities, such as the Prince's Trust group meeting at lunchtime, activities are piloted outside the conventional school timetable, so that their success can be built on by future incorporation into mainstream provision. Sporting activities are very lively, well supported, and recognised by a Sportsmark Silver Award. Abundant opportunities exist for taking part in team games, whether representing for the school, or taking part in the house and year competitions. Such provision makes sure that all may choose to take part.
36. From Year 7, students learn about careers and the world of work in form tutor lessons, through withdrawal classes and through special events, such as enterprise weeks. Students undertake work experience in Year 10. The well-established Connexions service makes a significant contribution to students' planning for careers, especially in Year 11. Other aspects of the excellent provision include visiting speakers, careers conventions, mock interviews, the well-stocked library and helpful computer programs.
37. Accommodation is satisfactory. Improvements which will benefit the sixth form and sport are under construction. The new, well-stocked library is large and inviting and is expertly managed by a full-time chartered librarian with an experienced part-time assistant. The buildings are well maintained and throughout the school very good displays celebrate achievement and add positively to students' learning. Limited provision for music restricts some aspects of the otherwise excellent provision. The large playing fields, courts and all-weather areas are good. The gymnasium is small and changing rooms are cramped. Staffing is very good. Teachers are appropriately qualified and experienced. The clerical, administrative and non-teaching staff support the work of the school very well. They are

included in appraisal and professional development procedures. Resources are good. The ratio of computers to students, which was an issue at the previous inspection, has improved, although their accessibility in some subjects is limited.

Sixth form

The school provides a very good range of academic courses that meets the needs and aspirations of the students very well. The range and quality of enrichment activities are excellent. Accommodation for learning is satisfactory. Resources are good.

Main strengths

- Students benefit from an excellent range of enrichment activities
- A very good range of academic courses meets students' needs
- The school avoids duplicating vocational courses offered elsewhere in the area

Commentary

38. The school provides a very good range of AS and A-level courses, well matched to the needs of its students, with a bias towards more traditional academic subjects. At present, vocational courses are not available on-site. The school collaborates with other providers to avoid duplicating provision locally. Students are involved in a very good general studies programme which includes religious education. The statutory requirement for a daily act of religious education is not met. Students benefit from an excellent range of enrichment and extra-curricular activities, off site fieldwork, arts, sporting and scientific activities, from visits to universities and visits from outside specialists.

Care, guidance and support

Support, advice and guidance for students are outstanding. Students are monitored and supported exceptionally well as they move through the school. The school provides excellent opportunities for seeking students' views about their work and personal development and students are involved very well in school life and decision-making. Systems to ensure safety are very good.

Main strengths

- Staff know students very well and provide excellent support and guidance
- The support for students at key transition stages is very good
- Very good systems of monitoring progress ensure that students and parents receive excellent support and guidance in selecting courses, targets and careers
- Students influence and contribute to change through school councils

Commentary

39. Support for students' safety and security is very good. Very good arrangements for first aid are available. Child protection training arrangements are in place for all staff. Supervision for students outside lessons is excellent. Most day-to-day health and safety matters are dealt with routinely and there are yearly checks on equipment but a small number of subject areas do not ensure full adherence to safety guidelines and not all checks are recorded as recommended in health and safety plans. Internet safety is very well led and managed.
40. Excellent guidance and support for students contributes to the students' very positive attitudes to learning. Students appreciate the individual support they receive because staff know the students very well. Students can rely on a variety of sources of guidance such as tutors, heads of school, year heads, teacher assistants, career guidance staff, including the Connexions adviser, and senior staff. Some sixth-form students take part in mentoring and further support younger students in the school as part of the care programme.
41. Students who join the school in Year 7 are inducted exceptionally well into the school through visits, meetings and consultations. A very effective options programme in Year 9 guides students in their subject choices and courses in Years 10 and 11, and transition to the sixth form is closely monitored and supported.
42. All students are very well integrated within the school and provision for different groups of students in lessons is very good; enrichment activities outside lessons are outstanding.

43. Students receive excellent careers advice as they move through the school and ICT programs enhance provision for all students. Careers advice is exceedingly well organised with work experience in Year 10; this helps students to make appropriate decisions.
44. Arrangements for assessment and for tracking progress form a very effective base to monitor students' personal development and achievements. Parents are included in this system and this supplements the very good provision of reporting to them. Students, including those with special educational needs, are involved well in setting and reviewing their targets, and there are opportunities to evaluate their own and others' work to improve achievement.
45. Students are able to make themselves heard through the school council structure where discussions on matters of interest to all students are discussed. This ensures that students have a voice in different aspects of school life. Their views are taken very seriously and the school, where it is reasonable and practicable, has taken action.
46. Arrangements to ensure that students with special educational needs are very well cared for are thorough and followed well by all staff. These students are identified early through liaison with the primary schools and an excellent school assessment system. Achievement is carefully recorded and appropriate individual targets set to help guide students, their parents and the teaching staff with what needs to be done. Transition arrangements for students with special educational needs are very thorough at every stage of their education, enabling them to make the right choices for their future education and careers.

Sixth form

Students receive excellent guidance and advice and their views are valued.

Main strengths

- Advice about higher education and careers is particularly valuable
- Sixth form views are regularly sought about school issues

Commentary

47. The provisions made to guide students as they join, move through and leave the sixth form are excellent. Students' views are taken very seriously and considered very carefully by the school. Guidance on further study is excellent.
48. Students receive excellent advice and support when applying for university or employment. Gifted and talented students receive extra help to reach high targets and aspirations. Students are very effectively monitored and they are encouraged to have very high expectations. They feel exceptionally well supported, especially by subject teachers, sixth form staff and the specialist support structures within the sixth form. The support and advice provided in tutor groups is generally very good and time is spent very productively.
49. Students are very involved in all areas of the sixth form including academic and social aspects. They make their views clear on a number of issues; they are closely consulted, for example on uniform, and support the school in raising funds for charities. Students are extremely loyal to the aims of a school which has raised their own aspirations. One student said, 'It's like one big family; you know everyone'.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school has built very good relationships with parents and with other schools. Its links with the community are excellent. It has continued to develop and extend its partnerships with parents, and with other schools and the community since the last inspection, and the improvement has been good.

Main strengths

- Parents have very positive views of the school, and the strong relationships between home and school support students' achievements very well

- The school provides a wide range of high quality information for parents
- The very wide and varied community links contribute to the high standards achieved, and to students' personal development
- The links with universities and colleges, and other schools are very good, providing many benefits to students

Commentary

50. Parents who responded to the questionnaire or attended the meeting expressed strong approval of the work of the school. They feel it provides a very good education, and believe their children are expected to work hard and achieve their best. Teaching staff work very well with parents, encouraging them to help their children at home and take an interest in the life of the school.
51. Parents say their children like school, and they are positive about the efforts made to help them settle in. The fact that the school is popular and oversubscribed reflects the great satisfaction of both parents and students. A number of parents feel that the school does not seek their views on relevant issues, and the school recognises that it could do more to consult parents and take their views into account.
52. The positive relationships with parents, and the fact that students are well known to the pastoral staff, provide a strong basis for sharing information and raising any concerns. Heads of year and heads of school are quick to contact parents if there are problems or when an individual has done particularly well.
53. Parents are given regular updates and advice on the progress of their children through consultation meetings, as well as progress reports circulated twice a year. These reports provide a clear picture of the students' current situation, with helpful guidance on improvement.
54. Parents support their children's learning at home by ensuring homework is completed and ensuring they attend school when they should. There is very high attendance at parental consultation meetings and events such as concerts and plays. The parents association, although run by only a small group of parents and staff, organises a wide range of social and fundraising events, usually bringing in more than £10,000 a year for the school. It has recently provided laptop computers and resources in the food technology rooms.
55. Links with other educational institutions are very good. The school has an impressive network of links with many schools and colleges in the area. Very effective induction arrangements with partner primary schools ensure that the school is well informed about each student's achievements and needs, and helps create a smooth transition into secondary education. The school has received the Sportsmark silver award with distinction, and through its contribution to the Sports Co-ordinator project, works with local primary schools to improve standards in physical education. The head of Year 7 visits primary schools to teach lessons in citizenship, and members of the music department visit primary schools.
56. The school hosts music festivals for primary schools in the area and primary school students can use the sports and arts facilities for out-of-hours learning.
57. Through its membership of the Peak 11 group, the school has developed close relationships with other providers of post-16 education in rural areas, with which it shares resources, professional support and training. The Peak 11 group is continually involved in developing innovative ways to improve the 14 to 19 curriculum, including exploring alternative curriculum provision and the expansion of vocational courses. The school competes against numerous local schools in sporting fixtures.
58. For the benefit of students with special educational needs, the school links very well with support services and outside agencies, such as the service for students with sensory impairment and the Connexions service. Links with other schools, particularly on entry to Year 7, colleges and other providers are very carefully fostered to ensure the best possible educational opportunities are provided for this group of students.

59. The school's links with the community are excellent. The annual commemoration service is held at Bakewell Church, and the school has representatives who serve on the Bakewell Community Interest Group. This helps to keep its profile high in the local town.
60. Good use is made of the local area and students take part in regular visits linked to the National Curriculum, for example to Castleton, Peak Park and Manchester Airport. A wide range of other trips to museums, theatres and art galleries in Liverpool and London is also provided.

61. The school sustains strong links with representatives from industry and commerce, which enable older students to make more informed choices about the world of work, as well as providing them with work experience placements. Local employers support the school's participation in the Young Enterprise project and a local business prints the school's termly newsletter.
62. Students make their contribution to the local community through a range of voluntary work, fund-raising and by taking part in drama and musical performances. The productions and performances organised by the music department are very successful, enabling many parents and visitors to enjoy student musicians. The school has developed a positive relationship with the local police who speak to students in assemblies as well as personal and social education lessons. The Rotary Club has provided funding for resources for the school's new building, and a local counselling organisation provides training for sixth formers as 'buddy counsellors' to younger students.
63. Local organisations, including adult education institutions, hold classes and activities at the school. The school runs twilight AS level courses in religious education and music technology, which are open to members of the community.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The headteacher provides outstanding leadership and is very ably supported by the senior management team. Governors contribute very effectively to the school's drive for continuing success and improvement. Overall management of all areas of the school is excellent.

Main strengths

- The headteacher and senior team provide excellent leadership with a clear and united vision for development and the continued raising of achievement
- Management is smooth and efficient with excellent day-to-day routines
- Governors are very effective and provide the leadership with appropriate support and challenge
- The leadership and management of special educational needs are excellent
- Outstanding financial management is closely focused on improving achievement

Commentary

64. The headteacher provides outstanding leadership that ensures that this popular and oversubscribed school runs very effectively. The school is dedicated to raising standards and results, to providing an appropriate curriculum that suits the changing needs and aspirations of all students, to helping its students to grow into successful and thoughtful adults, and to providing the highest standards of guidance and welfare. Under the headteacher's humane guidance, senior managers work very efficiently as a team. Leadership is reflective, analysing provision perceptively in order to provide appropriately for the future development of the school. The school has responded very well to national initiatives and dealt with issues raised in the last inspection. Senior managers maintain a high profile around the school implementing its values, ensuring discipline and, through their dedication, providing excellent role models for students and colleagues.
65. The school is held in high esteem, and takes a leading role in local initiatives, such as the Peak 11 consortium. The headteacher acts as consultant and mentor to others. Understandably, the school draws students from a wide area. The day-to-day management of the school is very effective, and again it has been used as a model for others by the LEA, for example in its workforce re-modelling scheme.
66. The governing body understands the school's strengths and weaknesses very well. It is very supportive of the head and senior managers and is very well informed on all aspects of

school development. Governors scrutinise results and provide a constructive challenge to managers as necessary. They actively support the school through frequent visits and the constructive and thorough work of a suitable range of committees. The wide range of professional expertise amongst governors results in very well-informed support for individual initiatives, and in particular the recent closure and sale of the boarding premises to finance the building programme.

67. Leadership and management at subject and pastoral level are very dedicated and effective. They are excellent in geography, history, music and business studies.
68. The school has comprehensive and effective evaluation procedures, which provide it with an accurate picture of its development needs. This information is used very well in strategic planning, which has exceptional clarity of intentions and methods. All departments undergo a searching annual review. This involves the leadership team in evaluating strengths and weaknesses of teaching and learning and a thorough analysis of results. Individual staff targets are also effectively set and professional development needs identified. Reviewing the school's provision is a continuing process. It is a measure of the school's commitment to improvement that these effective systems for monitoring and evaluation are part of current plans for further development. Performance management is organised effectively. It is well informed by the school's purposeful use of performance data, which was an issue in the last inspection, but which is now a strength, and provides the sound basis on which the school has maintained and improved its performance.
69. Management of the school's finances is outstanding. The monitoring of spending is very tight and all decisions are very clearly linked to school priorities to improve students' achievement. The very high quality financial management skills of staff and governors have enabled the school to make the decision to sell a boarding facility to help fund a new building which will enhance the learning environment. Systems to allocate funds to departments are very good and, as a result, they have plentiful resources. The school also checks on departmental bids for improved information and communication resources to ensure that development is spread across all departments. All goods and services are purchased using the principles of best value. Spending decisions are firmly based on priorities outlined in the school strategic plan.

Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	5,217,865	Balance from previous year	290,489
Total expenditure	5,248,442	Balance carried forward to the next	259,912
Expenditure per pupil	3,620		

70. The leadership and management of learning support for students with special educational needs are excellent. Identification of students' needs, assessment, planning, provision and monitoring of students are very thorough. Liaison with subject departments and parents is very effective. Students with special educational needs are very well looked after in both the specialist base and in mainstream lessons.

Sixth form

Leadership, management and governance of the sixth form are excellent.

Main strengths

- The school has very high expectations of its students and supports them very strongly
- Students are enabled to develop the independence that will benefit them in higher education
- Routines are very smooth and efficient and benefit from very positive relationships amongst students and staff

Commentary

71. The school maintains very high expectations for students' work, conduct and development, while providing strong support and encouragement for each individual. The governors, senior management team and those with sixth form responsibility have shaped and organised the sixth form into a highly successful entity. It has a distinct philosophy. The

principal elements are: to provide a quality of teaching and curriculum that enables students to achieve the highest standards of which they are capable; to allow members of the sixth form gradually to assume greater freedom and independence as a suitable preparation for higher education; to encourage and enable students to participate fully and conspicuously in the outstanding range of additional activities, often taking responsibility for younger students. This enables them to be constructive role models for younger students.

72. Leadership and management are excellent. Systems for ensuring the pastoral welfare of students and for providing advice about future steps in their education and training are very well organised. Monitoring of students' work and general progress is thorough and supportive.

OTHER SPECIFIED FEATURES

Work-related learning

Provision in work-related learning is very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Learning about, for and through the world of work is very well developed within all aspects of the curriculum
- Students are motivated, work hard and achieve well because they can clearly see how what they do in school is related to their future
- The range of vocational course is to be increased in 2005/6 to cater for the few students who need a wider choice of options
- Leadership, planning and management for work-related learning are of a very high quality

Commentary

73. Students are helped very effectively to learn about the world of work through all their subjects, including very good careers education. In one personal and social education lesson, for example, Year 11 students maturely discussed which criteria would be most important for them, when looking for a job. Some felt that being happy and motivated would help them stay in one job for a longer time, while a few boys saw themselves as providers and so felt that the money was most important. Students have very good opportunities to undertake work experience and run mini-enterprises. Business studies is very well established, with good attention paid to teaching financial issues. There are a very large number of activities to support such learning including, mock interviews with local employers in Year 10, team-building exercises, careers talks by visiting speakers, careers conventions and simulated share trading games in the sixth form.
74. The thoroughness and relevance of the work-related learning contributes very effectively towards the keen sense of purpose and willingness to achieve demonstrated by the majority of students at the school. The school is gradually increasing the opportunities for vocational study within the restraints of available resource and finance. The number of courses offered to prepare students for the world of work is increasing next year in response to the needs and wishes of the few students who wish to follow more practical courses.
75. The leadership and development of work-related learning is excellent and the school is aiming for an Excellence in Work-Related Learning Award this year. The school is well advanced with ensuring that all subjects emphasise the applied nature of their studies.

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.

	Years 7, 8 and 9	Years 10 and 11
Standards	Above average	Well above average
Achievement	Good	Very good
Teaching and learning	Good	Very good

Leadership	Very good
Management	Very good
Progress since the last inspection	Very good

Main strengths

- Students benefit significantly from the wide variety of opportunities to develop in the subject, both in lessons and in extra-curricular activities
- Students' work in speaking and listening is often exceptional
- Teachers form very good relationships with students and create a very supportive and productive atmosphere in lessons
- Constructive assessment informs students exactly how to improve their work, particularly in Years 10 and 11

Commentary

Examination results

76. In 2004, Year 9 test results were above the national average, and well above at the higher levels. Results were in line with those of similar schools overall, and above at the higher levels. Girls and boys perform similarly well. The performance of students has been above the national average each year since the previous inspection. Great efforts have been made to ensure the reliability of teacher assessment in Year 9, and the number of students identified as working above level 5 has improved in each of the last three years. GCSE results in English and in English literature continue to be well above the national average for both girls and boys. One in five students attained an A or A* in English, and one in four in literature. Numbers entered for English literature have increased since the last inspection.

Standards and achievement

77. When they join the school, students' work in English is above average. By the end of Year 9 they have made good progress and by the end of Year 11 their work is well above average, showing that they have made very good progress overall during their time at the school. Students in Years 10 and 11 are achieving very well because of the careful way in which teachers structure coursework and their attention to detail in preparing their classes for the examination. Students are offered a wide variety of experiences with different types of text and this encourages them to develop their own writing, which is lively and confident in most cases. Many produce creative work of real quality, due in part to the strong emphasis in the department on the study and the writing of poetry. The standard of speaking and listening is very high, and often exceptional. The development of reading in the school is stimulated by the excellent library and the enthusiastic work of the library staff.

Teaching and learning

78. Nearly all teaching is of a good standard and much is very good, particularly in Years 10 and 11. It is persistent in encouraging students to improve and in its high expectations. Teachers encourage girls and boys equally and they respond equally well. Lessons are planned very well, with a good variety of activities that are well matched to students' attainments. Gifted students are extended well

with challenging texts. Teachers explain learning objectives very clearly; this gives all students confidence and particularly benefits lower-attaining students. Teaching assistants also play an important part in helping these students to achieve well. Very good relationships ensure that a very good working atmosphere is created and maintained. Teachers make very good use of questioning to encourage students and, in the best lessons, a real sense of collaborative learning is established. Occasionally, teachers either do not allow students to explore ideas enough or do not devote enough time to critical reflection. The marking of work is clear and supportive and students are aware of the level or grade at which they are working. In Years 10 and 11, constructive assessment, which helps students to be more aware of exactly how to improve, is provided as a matter of course, but is less widespread in Years 7 to 9. The introduction of a self-assessment system and an improved Year 9 scheme of work is helping to ensure that achievement is more consistent across the five years.

Leadership and management

79. A stimulating and mutually supportive working atmosphere has been created in the department. The leadership has a clear vision of what is important in the subject and gives a clear strategic direction. For example, the new schemes of work in Years 7 and 8 are already benefiting students' progress. The department enjoys a good reputation among students, who appreciate the commitment of its teachers. Most of the issues raised in the last report have been tackled successfully, including the development of media work and the use of ICT. Teachers use information from assessment effectively and its use is continuously being refined to raise students' achievement. Procedures for the monitoring and improvement of teaching have developed well but opportunities for the sharing of good practice are not provided often enough. Issues over accommodation remain, with many lessons timetabled outside the English area and some classes in a different room for each lesson. This results in problems over the accessibility of resources.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

80. Students join the school with language and literacy skills which are above average. By the end of Year 11 their skills are well above average, indicating very good progress. Speaking and listening are seen as strengths in almost all areas. A literacy management group attended by representatives from different subjects meets regularly to discuss literacy matters. This has a very beneficial effect on the development of literacy. The contribution made by subjects other than English to the development of language and literacy varies, however. Very good practice is evident in geography, where students discuss issues very thoroughly and are encouraged to write at length in different forms. In physical education, very good attention is paid to key words and basic literacy, and in science, a strong emphasis is placed on the correct use of technical language. Other subjects are less active in their approach. Lower-attaining students do not receive sufficient help to improve their spelling in modern foreign languages. Mistakes are not always corrected sufficiently in design and technology.

Modern foreign languages

All students take either French or German in Years 7 to 9. In Year 9 they may opt to begin a second language. In Years 10 and 11, students may choose to continue with either or both languages.

Provision in modern foreign languages is good.

	Years 7, 8 and 9	Years 10 and 11
Standards	Above average	Well above average
Achievement	Good	Very good
Teaching and learning	Good	Very good

Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since the last inspection	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Results for both French and German have been above or well above national averages in recent years
- Teachers use a very good range of activities to develop and consolidate learning
- Some very good teaching was observed but the best practices in teaching and assessment are not consistently evident
- Numbers opting to continue with languages are increasing

Commentary

Examination results

81. Results of teachers' assessments at the end of Year 9 have been consistently well above those reported nationally. At GCSE, in both French and German, results have been well above national averages. Although there was a decline in 2004, results for both subjects, for boys as well as girls, were still above average.

Standards and achievement

82. Standards observed in Years 7 to 9 were generally above average. By the end of Year 9, students use a range of tenses successfully, and have gained a good knowledge of expressions relating to the topics they have studied. They generally take pride in their written work, and overall they achieve well. However, the progress made by lower-attaining students is limited: while they acquire a fair range of vocabulary, they do not use it to convey information or opinions in any detail. In Years 10 and 11, students speak and write accurately about complex topics, for example the plight of homeless people in Germany, justifying their opinions with appropriate illustrations. The standards observed in Year 11, in both French and German, are above those indicated by the 2004 results.

Teaching and learning

83. No teaching observed was less than satisfactory, and some examples of very good practice were seen. Teachers have a good command of their languages, and mark students' work regularly and conscientiously. They establish a good rapport with students, the great majority of whom show a very positive attitude to learning. In the best lessons, teachers had planned carefully a good range of tasks to encourage students to develop their speaking, writing and comprehension skills, with good practical aspects to reinforce learning. For example, in two lessons students gained a very clear understanding of the nature and significance of word order in German, when the teachers allocated a word or a phrase to individuals, who then arranged themselves into a correct 'sentence' at the front of the class. However, in a number of lessons teachers placed too much stress on the importance of grammatical correctness or vocabulary acquisition, and this inhibited communication. Although most students are aware of the standards they are reaching and have a good general idea of what they need to do to improve, teachers advice is not always specific enough.

Leadership and management

84. Leaders have a clear vision of the role of languages. They are keen to improve teaching and learning, and to make studying languages more attractive. The department has been subject to staffing changes in recent years, which have impinged on the continuity of teaching and students' achievement. However, the school has made detailed plans for improvement, and is monitoring their implementation carefully. An early improvement is the increased numbers of students opting to continue with languages. Teaching rooms feature attractive and stimulating displays, including mementoes of activities on a recent exchange with France, and useful displays of key words and structures in French and German.

Improvements noted in the last inspection report have been consolidated, and the generally high standards have been maintained.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is very good.

	Years 7, 8 and 9	Years 10 and 11
Standards	Well above average	Well above average
Achievement	Good	Very good
Teaching and learning	Good	Very good

Leadership	Very good
Management	Very good
Progress since the last inspection	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teacher-student relationships are very strong, resulting in a positive working ethos
- Teachers explain work well so that students learn new skills and techniques quickly
- Homework is used effectively to extend learning
- The quality of marking varies and does not always make clear to students exactly what they must do to improve
- Teachers make excellent use of data to monitor students' progress

Commentary

Examination results

85. Results in national tests at the end of Year 9, in 2004, were well above average and have maintained a rising trend over recent years. GCSE results were well above average and students did particularly well at the higher grades.

Standards and achievement

86. Students enter the school in Year 7 with above-average mathematical skills and achieve well from this starting point. By Year 11, students apply their skills very confidently in independent investigational work. During a lesson on types of angles and use of a protractor, the students developed a clear understanding and applied the skills very quickly as a result of the clear explanation. Students with special educational needs achieve well because of carefully-targeted support from teachers and the additional help given by teaching assistants. The presentation of students' work is good.

Teaching and learning

87. Teachers explain and build mathematical concepts very clearly and, as a consequence, students develop their understanding and solve complex problems methodically and confidently. Teachers give very good individual support. Students appreciate the help they receive, which helps them to work independently. Very good relationships exist in the classroom and this produces a very good learning environment where students contribute readily and are not afraid to make errors. Lessons are well planned and organised. Teachers use a good range of activities to enable students' mathematical skills and understanding to be built up systematically. A good example of this occurred in a Year 7 lesson on 'probability', where the students discussed and tested the likelihood of obtaining a certain number when throwing a dice. As a result, the students understood the term 'relative frequency' through investigative work, and they learned associated key terms precisely. Teachers use interactive whiteboards confidently and this benefits students' learning of difficult skills. Lessons were particularly effective when a brisk pace was maintained which kept students' focused and motivated. Teachers place a strong emphasis on encouraging students to show their working process, which consolidates their learning. Homework is used effectively to build on concepts taught in the lesson and develop students'

independent learning. In Years 10 and 11, set pieces of work are marked to GCSE criteria and as a consequence students are aware of their target grades. Marking is inconsistent and is not always helpful in informing students what they need to do to improve. In Years 7 to 9, students are not always aware of the level at which they are working.

Leadership and management

88. There is a strong vision for improvement within the department which includes a strong focus on improving teaching and learning. Schemes of work have been improved in Years 7 to 9 and a modular GCSE course introduced to ensure that the mathematics curriculum meets the needs of the students effectively. The department is developing a comprehensive system of monitoring student progress using ICT and has become an RM centre of excellence for the use of data software.

Mathematics across the curriculum

89. Students' numeracy skills are well developed, enabling them to apply their mathematical understanding well in other lessons. Good opportunities are provided for using number across the curriculum. In science, students calculate pressure, plot pH curves and extrapolate data. Very good examples of the use of graphs were seen in geography, particularly in extended GCSE course work where students presented data in appropriate graphical form to communicate research findings. In a Year 7 physical education lesson, numeracy skills were related to quad muscles and linked with right angles in developing good football passes. The use of numeracy skills was promoted in design and technology through accuracy in calculating and measuring in practical work.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is very good.

	Years 7, 8 and 9	Years 10 and 11
Standards	Well above average	Well above average
Achievement	Very good	Very good
Teaching and learning	Very good	Very good
Leadership	Very good	
Management	Very good	
Progress since the last inspection	Good	

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good leadership and management is promoting higher standards of achievement
- Very good teaching results in students learning and achieving very well
- Very good tracking procedures are being introduced to enhance the monitoring and guidance of students' progress
- Insufficient emphasis is placed on independent investigative work to challenge students

Commentary

Examination results

90. Results in national tests at the end of Year 9 tests were well above the national average in 2003 and remained at this level in 2004. Results were well above those of similar schools. GCSE results in 2003 were well above average and in line with those in similar schools. Results rose in 2004 and were well above average and well above those in similar schools.

Standards and achievement

91. Standards are well above average in Year 9, for example in terms of students' ability to write word equations, understand chemical formulae and calculate moments of forces. In

Year 11, standards are again well above average, for example in understanding the role of insulin in regulating blood sugar levels and trends in properties such as density and ionic radii in the Periodic Table. All students, including those with special educational needs and those who are gifted and talented, make very good progress and achieve very well.

Teaching and learning

92. Teaching is very good throughout science but more consistent in its impact in the lower school. Teachers have high expectations of both the level and pace of work. Lessons are well-structured, with a good variety of activity to engage and sustain students' interest. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and explanations are clear, with regular questioning to check students' understanding. Teachers place a good emphasis upon the use of technical vocabulary and upon developing students' numeracy skills. Effective use is made of teaching assistants to support students with special educational needs. Students' attitudes are very good. They respond and learn very well. Good progress has been made in implementing the National Strategy for science. This is having a significant impact upon teaching in Years 7 to 9, but is not yet fully in place. Suitable extension of the Strategy into the upper school is planned. Good progress has been made in developing the use of assessment to find out students' initial ideas. Some detailed marking of students' work takes place, providing useful feedback on how to improve, but this is not consistent across the department. Limited use of extended questioning and writing takes place to develop students' understanding more deeply. The use of ICT is being increased with a newly acquired set of laptops, but overall use of ICT is still restricted by the limited accessibility of computers. The development of scientific enquiry skills is planned in regular practical work but opportunities are not consistently taken to reinforce these skills. Not enough use is made of more open, challenging investigative work to extend students' skills in working independently.

Leadership and management

93. The department maintains a clear focus on raising standards, which has been most consistently successful in Years 7 to 9, where there are more detailed schemes of work. Areas of current development include the sharing of expertise amongst subject specialists and the development of more detailed schemes of work in Years 10 and 11. The issue of alternative curriculum provision for some students in Years 10 and 11 has been rightly identified as a means of improving standards further. Very thorough student tracking procedures have been introduced in the lower school and extension is planned to the upper school to monitor and guide students' progress. The good arrangements for helping students prepare for examinations are being further strengthened in Years 10 and 11. Monitoring of teaching and learning has been increased to develop the effectiveness of teaching further and enable the very good existing practice to be fully shared. Teaching is now very good and standards in Year 9 are well above those in similar schools. This represents good progress since the previous inspection.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

	Years 7, 8 and 9	Years 10 and 11
Standards	Above average	Above average
Achievement	Good	Good
Teaching and learning	Good	Very good

Leadership	Very good
Management	Good
Progress since the last inspection	Very good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good leadership and teaching and much-improved planning are leading to improved achievement for all
- Students are benefiting from the introduction of the National Strategy for ICT

- Tasks are not well enough matched to the range of attainment within some groups
- Cramped accommodation limits teaching methods and what can be taught in some rooms

Commentary

Examination Results

94. In 2004, results in the short course GCSE were above the national average.

Standards and achievement

95. Standards seen during the inspection in Year 11 were above course expectations. Standards on entry are average and students in Years 7 to 9 are benefiting from experiencing the National Strategy from their arrival at the school. Students produce spreadsheets and PowerPoint presentations of very high quality. They make detailed Internet searches to meet scenarios such as planning a trip to Paris. By Year 11, lower-attaining students write about spreadsheets they have created. They enter text data into cells, change the font style and colour, wrap text, set the print area and add text to page headers. The higher-attaining recommend appropriate hardware for different users and discuss appropriate fonts and styles for different users. Students use an industry standard data base package to produce coursework, and use a creative program, for example to design an adventure park. In Years 10 and 11, at all ability levels students achieve well because the theory and skills are learned through their application to meaningful and interesting activities.

Teaching and learning

96. In Years 7 to 9, students benefit from the adoption of materials that are based on the National Strategy but have been adapted to make work more relevant to the local context. This enables all teachers to teach well-structured lessons that lead to systematic coverage of the requirements of the National Curriculum. In lessons observed, relationships were good, teachers organised students and tasks well which led to productive lessons. However, students with special educational needs and the most experienced and competent users of ICT were each given identical tasks. This often meant that the progress of some students was limited to how quickly the teacher could get round the class while very competent users quickly finished their work. In both instances students learned less than they could have done. In Years 10 and 11, students are well supported in their individual work, and they work well independently. Setting enables work to be much better matched to students' capabilities than in the lower years. The best teaching often involves the expert use of the interactive whiteboard, which held the attention both of its operators and the remainder of the class. In a Year 8 lesson, students learned very effectively how to target Internet searches through a combination of demonstrations by students and very well-targeted questioning.

Leadership and management

97. The unsatisfactory provision of ICT at the time of the last inspection has been greatly improved. Good plans exist for its further development. The introduction of the National Strategy for ICT in Years 7 to 9 has been very beneficial. The availability of an examination course for all students in Years 10 and 11 is a further worthwhile development. Staffing is very good and all teachers demonstrate a high level of subject expertise. Accommodation is unsatisfactory because limited space prevents the best use of computers. They are crammed into rooms with no space for non-computer-based work, and whole-class teaching is made very difficult. Two of the rooms are open-plan and teaching from the next room makes concentration difficult.

ICT across the curriculum

98. Provision for the use of ICT across the curriculum is satisfactory. The number of computers in the school is below the national average for secondary schools. Coordination of ICT across the curriculum is at an insufficiently senior level to drive curriculum change. ICT is used effectively in some subjects, for example history and geography, where students use computers for research. In religious education, students used the Internet to search for information about Christian charities such as the Christian Children's Fund and The Salvation Army. In physical education, ICT use is varied and imaginative. Heart monitors and digital cameras are used effectively, and video cameras are used to analyse and improve performance in gymnastics. In music, industry standard software is used for

composition in Years 10 and 11. A thorough survey has been conducted into the use of ICT across subjects. However, the below-average numbers of computers in the school makes access difficult and, in design and technology, where the lack of computers prevents some aspects of the course from being fully taught.

HUMANITIES

Geography

Provision in geography is very good.

	Years 7, 8 and 9	Years 10 and 11
Standards	Well above average	Well above average
Achievement	Very good	Very good
Teaching and learning	Very good	Very good

Leadership	Excellent
Management	Excellent
Improvement since the last inspection	Very good

Main strengths

- Examination results have shown a continuous rise in recent years
- Very good relationships between teachers and students lead to very positive attitudes to work and this enhances students' learning
- Work is very well matched to the needs and abilities of all students
- Exceptionally high standards are reached in fieldwork in Years 10 and 11
- Computers are used very effectively for research

Commentary

Examination results

99. Results in the 2004 GCSE examination were well above average, overall, continuing the trend of the previous four years. The percentage of students gaining A* and A grades was significantly above average. Boys' results were particularly high. Results of teacher assessments in Year 9 were well above average.

Standards and achievement

100. Students enter the school with skills and knowledge in geography that are broadly average, as they have had varied prior experiences. Observation of lessons and scrutiny of students' work confirm assessments made by teachers that standards by the end of Year 9 are well above average, representing very good achievement. For example, students have very good knowledge of physical processes involved in coastal erosion and deposition, earthquakes and volcanoes. They also have very good knowledge of the effect that these have on local communities. In Years 10 and 11, they continue to achieve very well, and, by the end of Year 11, standards are well above average. Higher-attaining students display exceptionally high standards in their independent fieldwork studies. They have very good knowledge and understanding of the reasons for, and the impact of, population control in different world locations.

Teaching and learning

101. Lessons are very well planned with an excellent and varied range of activities that match the needs of all students. Lesson objectives are very clear and so students are well aware of what they are to learn. Students are immediately engaged in lessons because of the very good starter activities, which reinforce their prior learning and introduce new topics. A characteristic of very good lessons is that teachers use ICT very effectively to enable

students to acquire new knowledge of different locations such as Antarctica and India. In all lessons, very good resources are used to enhance learning. Relationships are very good and teachers have very high expectations of students. Consequently, they display very good attitudes and behaviour and show interest in the subject. Teachers question students very effectively in order to recap prior learning and to give further challenge to students to justify their opinions. They mark students' work regularly, but the quality of comments in books does not consistently enable students to know how to improve their work. However, students have very clear knowledge of their attainment in regular tests at the end of units of work.

Leadership and management

102. The department is very ambitious with a very clear vision for further improvement. Teachers work very effectively as a team, ensuring that they share good practice which helps students to achieve the very high targets that are set. The department constantly evaluates the quality and effectiveness of teaching and learning and is working continuously to improve provision. Procedures to check on the students' progress and achievement are very strong and the department closely analyses results to monitor students' progress and guide planning. A very strong feature of the department is that it now shares its good practice with other schools, helping them to improve. Despite changes in personnel, high standards have been maintained since the last inspection. Resources have improved and the effectiveness of teaching has developed very well.

History

Provision in history is excellent.

	Years 7, 8 and 9	Years 10 and 11
Standards	Well above average	Very high
Achievement	Very good	Excellent
Teaching and learning	Very good	Very good

Leadership	Excellent
Management	Excellent
Progress since last inspection	Very good

Main strengths

- Excellent leadership and long-term management of learning result in a constant focus on improvement and excellent achievement in external examinations
- Teaching and learning are very good, and sometimes excellent
- Teachers' knowledge, experience and skill lead to exceptional support for all students, including those with special educational needs
- Students' are taught to listen as well as to speak, so they support each other in learning exceptionally well

Commentary

Examination results

103. In 2004 results of Year 9 teacher assessments were well above those expected nationally, especially at higher levels, as they have been for the last three years. More students take GCSE than in most schools, and results were very high, as they have generally been in recent years. Many more students gained higher grades than nationally. Over the last four years, contrary to nationally, there has been little difference between boys' and girls' performance.

Standards and achievement

104. Students achieve very well in Years 7 to 9, and excellently in Years 10 and 11. They begin school with average attainment, but with a varied experience of history, and so have achieved very well by reaching the above-average standards seen in Year 9 during the inspection. Current standards in Year 11 are well above average, and the achievement of this year group is excellent as has been the case over the past few years.

Teaching and learning

105. Teaching and learning are very good across all years, and excellent in a significant proportion of lessons. Teachers are exceptionally skilful, knowledgeable and reflective, constantly challenging students to do their best. 'Risk taking' and innovation often lead students to higher achievement than one might expect, and 'fun' is firmly on the agenda. Students' levels of understanding and of expression, especially in oral work, are very high. For example, in a Year 11 lesson on Northern Ireland, students displayed very mature understanding of underlying historical issues in a very well planned lesson which challenged and extended their views significantly. Relationships are affable and productive in all lessons. Students' enthusiasm and commitment to their work result in their excellent achievement in Years 10 and 11. They show respect for teachers, and for each other, and this is clear from the way they listen and work constructively together. Students are made clear about the strengths and weaknesses in their work from the very good assessment procedures. Students are very appreciative of their teachers and keen to acknowledge their commitment and quality.

Leadership and management

106. The department is reflective and has an enthusiastic and rigorous commitment to improvement, with a clear knowledge of its strengths and areas for further development. All issues identified for improvement during the inspection were already a focus for improvement. This includes the more exacting use of data to calculate students' progress and set targets. Mutual support is very strong amongst the teachers. Good practice is very well shared and embedded. The department provides excellently for the learning needs of students across the whole range of ability. Improvement since the last inspection has been very good. All issues have been resolved and many innovations introduced.

Religious education

Provision in religious education is very good.

	Years 7, 8 and 9	Years 10 and 11
Standards	Well above average	Well above average
Achievement	Very good	Good
Teaching and learning	Very good	Good

Leadership	Good
Management	Very good
Progress since the last inspection	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- GCSE examination results in the full course in 2004 were excellent
- The new schemes of work are very effective as a guide to planning lessons
- The departments very thorough knowledge of examination requirements leads to high standards and very effective learning
- Marking is thorough and conscientious but is as yet inconsistent across the department

Commentary

Examination results

107. GCSE results in the full course in 2004 were very high. Three quarters of the 121 candidates gained A* or A grades. Results were above average for the 99 candidates who took the short course examination.

Standards and achievement

108. Students' standards in religious education are above expectation for their age when they join Year 7. Through their work in Years 7 to 9 they achieve well so that standards rise to be well above average. Their work is particularly good where they interpret and learn from religion. Students perceptively compare and contrast elements of Christianity Hinduism and Islam, which deepens their knowledge and understanding of these religions. Discussion skills are effectively developed as a means of deepening students' knowledge and understanding. In Year 9, a written report of a conversation between a Christian and an agnostic led to high standards of critical and analytical work. Homework is completed to a high standard and with regular use of ICT. In Years 10 and 11, the standard of work seen is currently well above average and students achieve well. They say that they particularly enjoy the moral and ethical topics they study. This was amply demonstrated in a very good class discussion about the complex moral implications Muslims face when responding to world poverty. Written work indicates a mature understanding of the issues tackled.

Teaching and learning

109. Teachers plan lessons with care and include a good variety of learning activities. Stimulating starter activities focus students' attention well and establish the teachers' high expectations for the lesson. Teachers use question-and-answer very effectively as a teaching method. In a Year 9 lesson on the ultimate questions in human life, students achieved a very brisk pace of learning and developed their speaking skills very well in response to searching questioning and the opportunity to reflect on and express their views. At the end of lessons, students generally have opportunities to consolidate their learning by responding to teachers' quick-fire questions on the lesson content. In Years 10 and 11, teachers' very thorough understanding of examination requirements leads to very effective learning. Occasionally, lessons were marred by the challenging behaviour of individuals, but the vast majority showed very good attitudes to learning. Marking of students' work is conscientious but is not consistent across the department in giving students guidance about the standard of their work and how to improve it.

Leadership and management

110. The department is well led and very well managed. The newly-appointed leadership has made a good start in building an effective team, who feel supported and valued. Teachers are successfully implementing the new Agreed Syllabus and broadening the range of teaching methods. The very good schemes of work provide a thorough and helpful guide to lesson planning. Regular meetings enable the full and part-time members of the department to share ideas and compare marking, which provides a good basis for sharing successful practice and achieving a consistency of provision throughout the subject. The use of assessment levels in Years 7 to 9 is well developed and provides a useful stimulus to raising standards. Resources are efficiently managed. Planning is well advanced on the best use of the new accommodation soon to be provided and developments to improve overall provision, including the extended use of ICT.

TECHNOLOGY

Design and technology

Provision in design and technology is very good.

The department offers a range of five GCSE courses and an enhanced option in Year 9 for students who wish to broaden their experience in design and technology.

	Years 7, 8 and 9	Years 10 and 11
Standards	Well above average	Above average
Achievement	Very good	Good
Teaching and learning	Very good	Very good
Leadership	Very good	

Management	Very good
Progress since the last inspection	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve very well in practical work because of the expert teaching
- Further improvement to standards in Years 10 and 11 are being restricted by a shortage of computers
- GCSE projects show considerable skill in both designing and practical work
- Health and safety monitoring is not systematically recorded
- Deficiencies in the accommodation limit the effectiveness of some teaching

Commentary

Examination results

111. In 2004, GCSE results were above the national average. Girls did better than boys. Results of students studying graphics and textiles were well above average. Resistant materials and electronics products were average. Food technology results were below average and were lower than the previous year. Well-above-average results in textiles have been maintained over the last four years, and electronic product design has improved. The results of teacher assessments in Year 9 indicated that standards were very high in 2004.

Standards and achievement

112. Students have varied and overall below-average previous experiences of the subject at the start of Year 7. They make rapid progress and soon gain excellent practical skills because of the very good and often excellent teaching. In Years 7 to 9, students' practical work is characterised by high levels of precision and care. Students' keenness to learn enhances the quality of their products. In Year 8, students progress very well and make a range of interesting products that includes very good use of casting technologies and electronics. In Year 9, many students take the opportunity to extend their learning with an additional lesson in a chosen field of design and technology. This results in very high standards and exceptional understanding of modern manufacturing processes.
113. Many GCSE projects are based on creative ideas and students produce practical work that shows high levels of skill. For example in Year 11, students were making a wide range of high quality products that included fashion design work based on film genres, graphical design to create corporate branding, electronic alarms, food products for special situations, and resistant materials work with creative mixtures of using hand tools and computer-aided manufacturing. Standards and achievements in designing in all years are being limited by the limited access to ICT.

Teaching and learning

114. Teachers have expert subject knowledge and schemes of work are interesting and challenging. The often-innovative teaching motivates students to learn very well. Teachers provide good resources for lessons and the work is structured well by the use of study booklets and additional materials. Teachers use clear instructions and provide very good individual advice and guidance in lessons. Noise transfer across the open-plan accommodation reduces the effectiveness of teaching.

Leadership and management

115. Beneficial changes have taken place since the last report and the dedicated teachers work together very well and freely give their time to help students. The wide range of courses and resources are very well organised. Support staff are very well managed and efficiently used. Health and safety monitoring is not systematically recorded and floors in food technology rooms are unsuitable. Some dust extraction equipment is ineffective. Since the last inspection many of the strengths have been maintained but some aspects of development are limited by the lack of ICT.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

Art and design

Provision in art and design is very good.

	Years 7, 8 and 9	Years 10 and 11
Standards	Above average	Well above average
Achievement	Good	Very good
Teaching and learning	Good	Very good

Leadership	Very good
Management	Very good
Progress since last inspection	Good

Main strengths

- GCSE results are well above average; students' work is stimulated by gallery visits
- Lessons are carefully planned and full of interesting activities
- Teachers establish strong links between the influences of artists and topics learnt
- Very good leadership and management enable high standards to be maintained consistently across the department

Commentary

Examination results

116. The GCSE results of the large group were well above average in 2004. The proportion gaining A* to C grades was high.

Standards and achievement

117. Students join the school with average standards and varied experience of art. By Year 9, the majority are working above the expected national level. Students quickly acquire technical skills and use the formal elements of art with gradually increasing expertise. They show above-average skills in drawing from observation and their work shows insight and accuracy. This is a continuing trend. Achievement from students' starting points is good. They develop an appreciation of different artists, designers and craftspeople in their preparation for paintings, ceramics and textile work. Their visual imagination is sparked by responding to concepts such as surrealism or the variety of interpretations shown in portrait work. By Year 11, students are learning to be independent artists whose drawing, painting and craft work show imaginative flair. Their knowledge of contemporary art is enhanced by visits to galleries and sculpture venues. Students use computers to manipulate imagery but it is not widespread across the department.

Teaching and learning

118. Every teacher has good subject knowledge and lessons are packed with purposeful activity. Behaviour is good because teachers know how to attract and hold their students' attention. A clear strength of the teaching is the expectation that students can be successful and the constant attention to individual needs. Students are well informed about what they have to do. Work is explained in ways that students understand, allowing them to learn in clearly defined incremental steps. Students' work is regularly and accurately assessed. They are given helpful and constructive comments about how to improve and are stimulated by being given challenging but achievable targets. In Years 10 and 11, students benefit particularly from the range of specialist skills that teachers possess.

Leadership and management

119. The consistency of approach across the team is the result of very good leadership and management by the subject leader. The head of subject is a good role model for teaching, especially in the production of resources. The evaluation of results, and subsequent action, is very purposeful. Art displays of high quality around the school help boost confidence and celebrate achievement. Accommodation has improved by the head of subject's efforts. Since the previous inspection, all the strengths of the department have been maintained well.

Music

Provision for music is very good.

	Years 7, 8 and 9	Years 10 and 11
Standards	Well above average	Well above average
Achievement	Very good	Very good

Teaching and learning	Very good	Very good
Leadership	Excellent	
Management	Excellent	
Progress since the last inspection	Very good	

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers' enthusiasm and range of expertise strongly motivate students
- Activities are interesting for students because theory is learned through its practical application
- Very good assessment ensures that students achieve very well over the whole range of ability
- An outstanding range of choral and instrumental activities is provided to stimulate students' social and cultural development
- Lack of computers limits the use of ICT in Years 7 to 9

Commentary

Results

120. GCSE results in 2004 were well above average.

Standards and achievement

121. Students enter the school with average attainment. By the end of Year 9, they reach standards that are well above average in all aspects of the course. They compose and read music with assurance and can recognise the significant chords used in writing harmony. Their wide-ranging musical knowledge encompasses the principal eras in musical history. They identify the characteristics which create mood and atmosphere in film music, and can identify the composers of a wide range of classical pieces. Numbers of students taking GCSE courses are small, this is largely a result of the pressures from other subjects as well as the knowledge that music will be open to them as an A-level course. In Year 11, students achieve very well and reach a high standard in solo and ensemble performances. Their composition skills are very advanced and they talk about all aspects of music with great confidence.

Teaching and learning

122. The very good relationships established through extra-curricular activities and in class ensure that music is enjoyed and accessible to all. Teachers have expert practical skills and lessons are directed with infectious enthusiasm. Musical theory is closely linked with practical musical experiences. Tasks in lessons are demanding and rapid so that students cover ground and learn quickly without losing interest or momentum. Time is very productively used, for example where a Year 10 class had ten minutes to prepare group performances that included a range of specified technicalities. This resulted in focused and efficient collaborative learning. Teachers' advice and assessment ensure that students at all levels are suitably challenged and supported, and in particular students who are talented. Students have a very positive attitude to their work and show each other great respect and support. They know their levels of attainment and the criteria for success and strive hard to improve. Discussion skills are highly developed through music.

Leadership and management

123. The leadership and management are characterised by conspicuous vitality. Over a third of students learn to sing or to play an instrument from visiting teachers. Students loyally support the exceptional range of choirs and ensembles. Regular performances in school, the community and in national competitions provide outstanding opportunities for social and cultural development. Venues include Chatsworth House and the Royal Festival Hall. The range of music that students encounter stretches from chamber to pop. Music benefits immensely from the wide range of skills that the teachers contribute to the department, including the composition of works for school ensembles. All staff, by their dedication, are excellent role models for the students. Students in the main school receive excellent support and guidance from older students in rehearsals and in assistance with their compositions. Resources are sufficient but very heavily used by so many musicians. However,

the number of computers is insufficient for the large classes in Years 7 to 9. Accommodation is unsatisfactory for the wide range of activities that take place. Storage is insufficient. Small groups working within the lesson have to all work within the classroom, limiting the opportunity of listening, evaluating and discussing work in progress. The department has maintained very good standards since the last inspection and widened the scope of its activities.

Drama

124. Drama was sampled. The subject is taught in a separate department by a team of specialist staff. In work seen, standards of drama are above average. By year 9, students explore social issues thoughtfully in well-planned lessons. Here, they benefit from opportunities to develop their ideas in discussion, and communicate them with a lively use of acting and mime skills. Good teaching builds well on students' previous experiences and interests, by giving clear guidance and capturing their attention with a wide range of activity in class. In Year 11, teachers use very good subject knowledge to stimulate student interest and understanding of twentieth century innovation in the theatre and dramatic literature. This is explored beneficially in practical acting exercises where students' vocal work is varied and expressive. Their use of gesture and body language is sound in its communicative range, while conveying a very good critical and historical understanding of the texts they study.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Provision in physical education is very good.

	Years 7, 8 and 9	Years 10 and 11 non-examination	Year10 and 11 GCSE
Standards	Average	Above average	Well above average
Achievement	Good	Good	Very good
Teaching and learning	Good	Good	Very good

Leadership	Very good
Management	Very good
Progress since the last inspection	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Effective teaching is helping all students to learn and achieve well and leads to well above average standards in examination groups
- Students' very good attitudes enhance their learning and achievement
- The very good schemes of work are closely matched to students' needs
- Extra-curricular activities give excellent opportunities for students to extend their learning and experience
- Assessment on the GCSE course is not related clearly enough to examination requirements

Commentary

Examination results

125. GCSE results in 2004 were well above average and slightly above the 2003 results. More boys than girls are entered on the course. Boys do better in physical education than in most of their other subjects.

Standards and achievement

126. Students have below-average skills in some activities when they enter the school. Students' standards are average in Year 9 and students are achieving well from their starting points in Year 7. By the end of Year 11, those following the core curriculum course reach above-average standards. Achievement is good overall. In the GCSE course, standards are well above average. Students acquire practical skills quickly because they listen well, enjoy participation and respond well to points for improvement. Talented students are challenged well, and lower-attaining students learn well because teachers break down tasks into clear steps, give good demonstrations and provide good individual support. Standards reached

by talented team players are very high and students have excellent opportunities to perform at regional and national levels.

Teaching and learning

127. Students viewed one another's work, compared the work with National Curriculum levels and made evaluations on the performance. They learn well from each other and cooperate well together, demonstrating good personal development; opportunities to extend learning in citizenship are slowly developing. Opportunities for students to observe and analyse one another's performance as a means of improvement were seen in good lessons.
128. Lessons are well planned, with high expectations of behaviour, participation and performance so that students respond and learn well. Teachers' searching questioning is effective in prompting students' learning. Talented students have some good opportunities to demonstrate, which benefits other students' learning. They also lead groups. ICT is well used in GCSE lessons to analyse and improve performance. Good opportunities are provided for research, involving the school website, the Internet and the very good reference books in the school learning resources centre. In Years 7 to 9, assessment is thorough and well linked to National Curriculum requirements. Assessment on the GCSE course is not as effectively linked to targets, and marking does not always highlight areas for improvement or clearly relate to grades. Teachers usually review lessons to consolidate learning, but this is not done consistently.

Leadership and management

129. Very good leadership has given very effective direction to improve standards since the previous report; the targeting of borderline C/D pass rates has been very successful. Courses and activities are well chosen to meet students' needs and the curriculum is regularly evaluated and monitored. For example, dance, fitness and a leadership course have been introduced to meet the strengths and interests of students. Very good management ensures very good guidance for teachers in detailed schemes of work and a comprehensive handbook. Good improvements, including a theory room, are shortly to be available as part of the new accommodation. The department has successfully tackled all the issues in the previous report.

BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES

Business studies

The school offers a popular course in GCSE business studies and has recently introduced the applied GCSE in business.

Provision in business studies is excellent.

	Year 11
Standards	Well above average
Achievement	Excellent
Teaching and learning	Very good
Leadership	Excellent
Management	Excellent
Progress since the last inspection	Very good

Main strengths

- The popularity of the subject results in very good resources
- Specialist teachers combine well their academic and business backgrounds
- Teaching builds well on the subject's real world context
- The applied GCSE offers a very good broadening of the Year 10 curriculum

Commentary

Examination results

130. GCSE results in business studies in 2004 were well above the national average.

Standards and achievement

131. Standards seen during the inspection reflected the well-above-average results. Students know about laws affecting employment and the impact of the expansion of the European Union on businesses. The highest-attaining students can analyse markets, for example breaking into segments the potential market for watches. They can use business management techniques to analyse the strengths and weaknesses of businesses and can apply the product life cycle model to specific products such as new cars. Students significantly out perform their predicted grades and students identified as underachieving receive extra attention.

Teaching and learning:

132. Teaching is consistently stimulating and enthusiastic stemming from the expert knowledge of the teachers. In an excellent lesson on cash flow, each element of the lesson was carefully based on the assessment criteria of the examination. Questions were carefully targeted so that all students were included and challenged. The teaching was inspirational. Teachers know students' predicted grades and challenged them relentlessly throughout the lesson. Excellent relationships and very good support for students with special needs led to students making really good progress. In another lesson, students were required to explain at least three types of written and oral communications used at Manchester Airport. The teacher used a very good variety of resources. Students astutely compared what they discovered about the airport with the business they had chosen for their individual study. The use of trips and visits is very effective in bringing the subject alive and enabling students to apply theory to real scenarios. Students are very positive about the subject and really enjoy their learning. Computers are used very effectively by teachers but students in the GCSE course have less opportunity in class than is desirable.

Leadership and management

133. The subject is popular, successful and well established with very good resources. The extremely well-constructed course focuses students on the real world of business from the outset through a visit to the Trafford Centre. Regular visits to businesses enrich the course. Teachers' specialist strengths match the requirements of the course extremely well. Teachers work together very productively as a team. Business studies makes a very valuable contribution to vocational education. The subject provides a very useful vehicle for extending valuable links with the business community through the appointment of business advisors. The applied GCSE course has been successfully introduced since the last inspection. It has been very thoroughly researched and planned and is innovative in the school in broadening the Year 10 curriculum.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Personal education and guidance (PEG) and citizenship are combined for Years 7 to 9. In Years 10 and 11, the PEG course continues. In addition, all students follow either the GCSE short course or Entry Level Certificate in Citizenship.

Citizenship

Provision in citizenship is very good.

	Years 7, 8 and 9	Years 10 and 11
Standards	Above average	Well above average
Achievement	Good	Very good
Teaching and learning	Good	Very good
Leadership	Very good	
Management	Very good	

Progress since the last inspection

Not applicable

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students' achieve very well in Years 10 and 11 due to the very good teaching and their own very good attitudes to the subject
- Students' skills are developed very effectively through the planned curriculum and other beneficial opportunities, such as house activities and year and school councils
- A systematic review of what is provided leads to a continuous process of refinement and improvement
- Students do not have enough opportunities in Years 7 to 9 for extended writing

Commentary

Examination results

134. The results of teacher assessments for Year 9 students in 2004 showed that the vast majority of students met national expectations. Results at GCSE in 2004 were well above average, and there was an improvement on the pilot year of 2003 in the A* to C range. The high percentage of A* and A grades fell slightly with girls continuing to do better than boys at the highest levels.

Standards and achievement

135. By the end of Year 9, students have a good awareness of keywords related to citizenship and core topics, such as the legal age of responsibility. Their listening and oral skills are above average. They develop balanced viewpoints and are prepared to listen carefully and respond maturely to the views of others. Their good observational skills and general knowledge help them make useful connections in their learning, for example to draw parallels between people from different cultures. Good relationships ensure that time is used well and students complete written tasks conscientiously. Time constraints, however, do not always allow them to develop an extended response. Years 10 and 11 students have a very good understanding of abstract concepts and terminology, for example in the legal system and environmental issues. They categorise accurately and have strong evaluation skills, both orally and in writing. In pair and group work, they argue fully and persuasively from different perspectives, taking contextual evidence into account. Students of all abilities can identify, and show by their conduct, how their citizenship studies have modified their thinking and are contributing to their development as responsible young adults.

Teaching and learning

136. Form teachers in Years 7 to 9 are provided with clear and thorough lesson plans which ensure all students cover essential concepts. Teaching methods are effective and varied. In Years 7 and 8, drama plays a significant part in students' learning, for example about refugees and asylum seekers, as do suspended timetable days, for example health days and enterprise weeks. Students' understanding of citizenship benefits considerably in all years from the very good provision made in the personal education and guidance programme, including excellent preparation for students to learn about the world of work. Students polish their debating skills in house competitions and the new School Council, based on year councils, is well managed and growing in influence. In Years 10 and 11, committed specialist teachers have high expectations of their students. Students' understanding is developed through well-planned and fast-paced lessons, carefully matched to students' needs and aptitudes, combined with rigorous questioning. Students' responses are valued. Students are interested, ask questions regularly, which promote the learning of their fellows, work quickly and contribute maturely. On occasion, due to the need to cover content adequately in the fortnightly lessons, there is less independent learning in the first part of the lesson. Students' progress is well tracked through regular testing and interim examinations. Learning and achievement are supported well through careful coursework guidance, revision packages and feedback.

Leadership and management

137. Citizenship is well established in school and provision has been systematically refined and improved as a result of careful evaluation each year. Its quality reflects high levels of planning, commitment and teamwork to coordinate the wide-ranging programme. There is a strong impetus and capacity to maintain and raise further high standards.

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM

In the inspection, thirteen 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 tables below show entry and performance information for courses completed in 2004.

This table does not include the results of students who continued to A2.

Level 3 GCE A-level and VCE courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Art and design	30	100.0	98.3	63.3	50.2	97.3	87.1
Biology	47	100.0	98.9	48.9	40.0	85.5	79.3
Business studies	35	100.0	98.9	60.0	39.4	94.9	81.8
Chemistry	20	95.0	97.7	80.0	50.0	99.0	85.7
Drama	11	100.0	99.6	36.4	42.8	80.0	85.1
English/ English language	30	100.0	99.2	56.7	36.4	91.3	81.1
English literature	35	100.0	99.4	65.7	44.9	98.3	85.5
French	6	100.0	99.0	16.7	53.1	83.3	88.9
Design and technology	22	100.0	97.8	40.9	35.0	83.6	77.9
General studies	138	97.8	94.9	27.5	30.5	73.8	72.9
Geography	28	100.0	98.8	75.0	46.4	95.7	85.2
History	29	100.0	99.0	48.3	45.6	87.6	85.1
Information technology	22	95.5	96.3	36.4	25.7	72.7	71.1
Mathematics	31	100.0	96.8	64.5	56.6	100.6	89.5
Music	6	100.0	79.5	66.7	37.1	100.0	79.5
Other social studies	6	100.0	97.4	16.7	42.5	63.3	81.6
Physics	15	100.0	96.7	40.0	45.3	80.0	82.6
Religious studies	24	100.0	99.1	83.3	49.5	102.5	87.4
Sociology	23	100.0	98.5	73.9	45.3	94.8	84.6
Sports / PE studies	20	100.0	97.8	50.0	30.9	87.0	75.4

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

The focus subjects for the inspection were English literature and French. English language and German were sampled. In English language, results were well above the national average in 2003 and 2004. In the lesson observed, achievement, teaching and learning were very good. Standards were well above average. This was because very knowledgeable and supportive teaching created a very good atmosphere for learning. Skilful questioning enabled students to develop and express their own ideas very well. Very instructive comparisons were made between texts, helping students to explore the wider significances of language use.

No students were entered for German in 2004. In 2003, numbers were small at AS and A-level. Results for both groups of students were above the national average. Current numbers are also small. A good lesson in Year 12 was observed in which the teacher gave intensive coaching, focused on vocabulary building and the use of relative pronouns in German. Standards were well

above average and learning was good, thanks to the teacher's very good subject knowledge, and good pacing of activities.

English literature

Provision in English literature is excellent.

	Years 12 and 13
Standards	Well above average
Achievement	Excellent
Teaching and learning	Excellent
Leadership	Excellent
Management	Excellent
Progress since the last inspection	Very good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers have excellent knowledge of both the subject and the examination requirements
- Examination results are well above average
- Students apply themselves exceptionally well, debate and study maturely and receive excellent individual support
- The oral ability of most students is outstanding, although a few are passive in lessons

Commentary

Examination results

138. In 2004, results in English literature were well above the national average, as they have been since the previous report. Students performed better than in their other subjects. More girls than boys took the subject and performed slightly better relative to their national averages. This was also the case in 2003.

Standards and achievement

139. Most students taking A-level English literature have achieved results at GCSE that are well above average and the great majority make excellent further progress during their time in the sixth form. Standards in the subject are very good. Year 12 students make outstanding contributions to oral work, confident in their abilities and showing complete engagement with the texts they are studying. In Year 13, students not only debate perceptively the relative merits of varied texts but also discuss the qualities of their own work in a most adult manner. Students are coached carefully to write to a very good standard, and some written work is exemplary in its handling of complex ideas. They show an impressive commitment to the course, seen in the way they organise the very helpful critical material they are either given or research for themselves. Attitudes to work and learning are excellent throughout.

Teaching and learning

140. The teaching of this subject is almost uniformly excellent, enabling students to achieve in an atmosphere of rigour but also of support. Teachers have exceptional subject knowledge and a very thorough acquaintance with examination requirements. They prepare and teach lessons which challenge all students. Questioning is used very well to prompt students and help them to achieve. Specific learning outcomes are planned for well, with assessment objectives always at the forefront. Teachers encourage students to develop and express a personal response to literature, emphasising the need for them to learn independently. Students work in a collaborative atmosphere, helping each other to develop a wide range of knowledge and skills. In a Year 12 lesson on *Much Ado about Nothing*, students worked at a very high level, showing very good knowledge of the text and the ability to reflect, analyse and contextualise in a most mature manner. Teachers are exceptionally supportive throughout the course, for example in providing information on the background of literary texts or guiding students through the complexity of different critical

approaches to them. Of particular note is the high quality of the advice offered over coursework essays, which allows students to develop their own ideas while ensuring that they achieve as much as possible.

Leadership and management

141. The subject is highly organised and strongly led. Significant numbers of students choose to study English literature and retention rates are very good. This is a direct consequence of the esteem in which the department is held. Students are unanimous in their appreciation of the commitment they are given from teachers, both before and during the course. They are monitored carefully and given appropriate advice throughout. There is a tradition of very good results in the subject, going back at least to the previous report, which comes from clear strategic thinking and continuous planning for improvement. Accommodation for the subject is unprepossessing but this is being remedied through the current building initiative.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

142. When students join the sixth form, their standards of language and literacy skills are also well above average and they remain so in Years 12 and 13. In most subjects, teachers know their students very well and give good advice to individuals on how to improve their writing. In geography and history, for example, there is an issue with bridging the gap from GCSE in getting students to come to terms with the written demands of the subjects, but the departments are aware of this and are addressing the situation. In psychology, a new subject for students, literacy is recognised as a priority and good progress is being made in written and oral work. There is very good practice in physical education, where students are introduced to degree-level terminology and are led through discussion to practical activities and finally to written work of good quality.

French

Provision in French is good.

	Years 12 and 13
Standards	Above average
Achievement	Good
Teaching and learning	Good
Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since the last inspection	Insufficient evidence

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Results overall in recent years have been above the national average
- Teaching is good, and examples of very good practice were seen
- Teachers show very good subject knowledge and enthusiasm for French
- Students receive insufficient written advice about the standards they are achieving and what they need to do to improve

Commentary

Examination results

143. The number of students taking French has been small in recent years. Pass rates at A-level have been above the national average, although the percentage of students gaining higher grades has been below average.

Standards and achievement

144. Students build well upon the skills they have developed for GCSE. They understand native speakers talking in French at normal speed about contemporary issues, and use relatively complex language and structures with a good degree of accuracy in both writing and speaking. For example, in writing about the dangers of using a mobile phone while driving,

a student demonstrated a very good grasp of grammar through the correct use of the subjunctive. Students can express their views confidently in discussions in French, and produce good supporting evidence to justify their opinions.

Teaching and learning

145. Teachers have a very good command of the language and conduct the great majority of each lesson in French. Students cope well with this, and as a result have developed good listening and speaking skills. They are well prepared for examinations by teachers who are very much aware of A-level requirements and who use this knowledge to the students' benefit. However, students are not given sufficiently detailed or timely feedback about the standards they are achieving, or enough individual advice about priorities for improvement. Some teaching observed did not give students sufficient opportunities to use French, for example in general discussion or pair work. The best teaching however was very well planned to include a variety of well-sequenced activities which enabled students to develop all the skills required for study at this level. Students with different abilities worked cooperatively together, learning from each other as well as from the teacher, who made very good use of a range of well-prepared resources.

Leadership and management

146. Leaders show a good understanding of areas of development for French, and have taken some effective steps to bring about improvement. They have worked hard to mitigate the effects of disruption to teaching caused by staff changes, and have developed the course to suit students' learning preferences, for example by introducing coursework in Year 13. Students' progress is carefully monitored. However, good practice, for example the use of assessment to promote learning, is not yet sufficiently consistent. Some deficiencies in accommodation are being remedied in the current building programme.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is excellent.

	Years 12 and 13
Standards	Well above average
Achievement	Excellent
Teaching and learning	Excellent
Leadership	Very good
Management	Very good
Progress since the last inspection	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers give clear explanations of new concepts which help students to work well independently
- Teachers have excellent subject knowledge which greatly benefits students' learning
- Marking is informative and helps students to know what they have to do to improve
- Teachers give time generously outside lessons to help students
- The resources and accommodation restrict the use of ICT

Commentary

Examination results

147. Results in mathematics and further mathematics in 2004 were well above the national average.

Standards and achievement

148. Students' achievement is excellent as a result of a combination of the very positive attitudes they bring to lessons and the excellent subject knowledge of their teachers. Students set high expectations for themselves which is reinforced by their teachers. In lessons, students

work very hard and are prepared to ask for help when they do not understand a point. Students begin their course with above-average standards and they develop increasing confidence and competence through the excellent support by their teachers.

Teaching and learning

149. Teachers introduce new topics very clearly and build thoroughly on students' prior learning. Teachers explain new work very clearly breaking new topics down into manageable steps. For example, in a lesson on scalar products, the teacher revised work of vector equations of lines to expand their understanding to vector equations of planes and then convert the equations to Cartesian form. Lessons are well paced and as a consequence the students made considerable progress during the time. Teachers use questioning very effectively to consolidate what they know and extend their thinking. Students contribute willingly to discussions and build on each other's ideas constructively, which benefits their learning. Homework forms a valuable part of the students' learning, extending learning from the lesson and providing opportunities for extended independent research. Assessment is very thorough. Teachers monitor student performance carefully and work is often marked in considerable depth to support students, particularly if they are experiencing difficulty in understanding a topic. Students are fully aware of their target grades and know what they have to do to reach them. Although students use graphical calculators very proficiently, the accommodation restricts the use of computers.

Leadership and management

150. Teamwork is a very strong feature of the department and strengths in teaching are shared. Students value the commitment of the teachers and the additional help they give outside lessons to helping them. The course is organised very effectively and end-of-topic review tests give students a realistic idea about their performance because they are marked in accordance with A-level grades.

Numeracy across the curriculum

151. Overall, the competence in numeracy across the curriculum is well above average. Students use their very good numeracy skills very well to support and extend their work in other subjects. Students use their mathematical skills to produce very high level precision work in design and technology and in logic work in electronics. In chemistry, students work through calculations, successfully converting measurements to percentages, interpreting and plotting data and manipulating equations and exponentials. Analytical procedures are very well taught, enabling students to produce sophisticated data tables, graphs and charts, sometimes using ICT in the analysis. Excellent examples of students' work were seen in physical education, where they used formulae and applied them appropriately.

SCIENCE

Provision in biology and physics were sampled and chemistry was inspected in detail. A-level results in biology were well above average in both 2003 and 2004. In a Year 13 lesson seen, students were making good progress and achieving well in preparing and examining slides of bacteria and preparing bacterial lawns to study the action of antibiotics. Standards were well above average. A-level results in physics were well above average in 2003, and were average in 2004. In a Year 12 lesson seen, students were making good progress in developing their understanding of practical methods to determine Planck's constant, the wavelength and energy of different light sources and in using a model to simulate alpha-particle scattering. Standards were average.

Chemistry

Provision in chemistry is very good.

	Years 12 and 13
Standards	Well above average
Achievement	Very good
Teaching and learning	Very good

Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since the last inspection	Good

Main strengths

- Good leadership and management are promoting higher standards
- Very good teaching and learning result in students achieving very well
- High quality teaching resources motivate and engage students
- There is a strong emphasis upon developing students' skills in working independently

Commentary

Examination results

152. A-level results were well above average in both 2003 and 2004. The percentage of students gaining higher A and B grades rose from fifty per cent in 2003 to eighty per cent in 2004.

Standards and achievement

153. Standards in Year 12 are well above average, for example in students' understanding of electron orbitals and electron arrangements in atoms, of bond enthalpy calculations and their ability to do volumetric calculations. In Year 13 standards are again well above average, for example in their understanding of the interpretation of mass spectra for organic molecules, reaction kinetics and the equilibrium law. Students make very good progress and achieve very well in both years.

Teaching and learning

154. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and teach concepts effectively. Teachers have high expectations of levels of work and lessons are conducted at a brisk pace. The course is based upon high quality resource materials, where relevant chemical concepts are developed within the study of applied contexts such as medicines, designer polymers and fuels. Students appreciate this approach and find it motivating and interesting. A good variety of teaching methods is used, with problem-solving activities, comprehension tasks relating to chemistry within applied contexts such as the chemistry of interstellar clouds. A strong emphasis is placed on developing study skills, such as independent note-making. Tasks are imaginative, such as evaluating the safety and cost-effectiveness of marketing different drugs. The substantial independent projects provide valuable opportunities for developing students' skills in working more independently, researching background information and choosing suitable reaction conditions. Some good use of ICT takes place and further worthwhile developments in its use are planned. The curriculum is enriched with industry and university visits. Students' work is marked regularly with helpful comments and the use of examination grades.

Leadership and management

155. In a short time the new leadership has made appropriate plans for raising standards further. Monitoring of teaching and learning has been introduced, with feedback to staff, to enable good practice to be shared. A new centralised system has been introduced to track students' progress more closely. Emphasis upon independent working and development of thinking skills is being strengthened. There is closer monitoring of students' work in the extended practical project. Areas for development in teaching approaches have been identified, such as greater use of group work. Teaching, learning and achievement have improved since the last inspection.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

There was no focus subject in this area. In the ICT A-level results, in 2004, were above the national average. In the lesson sampled, standards were in line with course expectations. Good questioning and the use of a case study on a national newspaper led to students achieving well. A good emphasis on the examination requirements benefited students' learning.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

156. Students are keen to use computers in lessons and in private study time and they show a good level of competence. Good use of ICT was seen in a business studies lesson where the Internet was used in a well-targeted exercise to discover information regarding the European Union. An innovative approach to the curriculum has been piloted by some Year 13 students following a course electronically, with individual tutorials to prepare for AS level business studies. Graphical calculators are used in mathematics, but like other subjects, opportunities to use computers in lessons are restricted by a shortage of machines. Exceptions are in geography and physical education where ICT is used effectively and extensively, and in music, where its use is outstanding in the production of compositions and arrangements.

HUMANITIES

The focus of the inspection was on the A-level courses in geography, history and psychology. Sociology was sampled. Sociology results in 2004 were well above the national average. In the lesson on power and politics observed, standards were in line with course expectations and students made sound gains in knowledge and understanding but too few students were present to stimulate vigorous debate.

Geography

Provision in geography is excellent.

	Years 12 and 13
Standards	Well above average
Achievement	Very good
Teaching and learning	Very good
Leadership	Excellent
Management	Excellent
Progress since the last inspection	Very good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Excellent analysis of data enables suitably challenging targets to be set for students
- Leadership provides very firm direction and constant focus on improvement
- Teachers' high expectations are matched to strong support for students in a relaxed, but challenging, learning atmosphere
- Field work is used very productively to enhance and stimulate learning

Commentary

Examination results

157. Results in 2004 were well above the national average from a larger-than-average group of students, as was also the case in 2003.

Standards and achievement

158. Geography has been one of the highest performing subjects in the school for many years. Standards are currently above average but on track to rise further because of the department's strength and experience in the long-term management of learning and of examination preparation. Students' achievement is very good, as it has been over several years. Year 13 students entered the sixth form with average attainment overall, and are confident that they will achieve their above-average predictions because of the consistent and expert support of teachers. They understand geographical ideas very well and are

strong at structuring and sequencing answers to examination questions and using detail gained from astute research to provide reasons for their views.

Teaching and learning

159. Teachers have excellent subject knowledge, and a thorough awareness of examination requirements and individual students' needs. They are highly skilled in explaining and use a wide range of methods to develop and confirm students' knowledge and understanding of often complex ideas. Students use ICT very competently for research and presentation. Skills in map work and the interpretation of geographical sources are very good, even for average students. Most can argue a case fluently and give well-researched reasons for their views. Support from teachers is very good, for example in training students to understand and use examination mark schemes to help them produce work of a high standard. As a result, students often achieve above expectations. For example, in a Year 12 lesson on the dynamics of change, students of wide-ranging prior attainment were very well supported in answering complex examination questions on weather, which led very logically to very successful paired and individual work on plotting the drainage of river basins using Ordnance Survey maps. Students value the quality of the teaching they receive.

Leadership and management

160. The quality of leadership and management is evidenced by the consistently above-average results over many years. The teachers work together very productively. Very effective teaching skills are embedded and shared. The use of data to analyse the performance of individuals and groups is a clear strength, which enables teachers to gauge students' potential accurately and set appropriate targets. Teachers give freely of their time outside lessons, and fieldwork is very productively organised as a means of learning. This is a constantly evolving department that derives considerable enrichment from outside contacts, including university departments.

History

Provision in history is very good.

	Years 12 and 13
Standards	Above average
Achievement	Very good
Teaching and learning	Very good
Leadership	Excellent
Management	Very good
Progress since last inspection	No judgement possible

Main strengths

- Excellent leadership and very good long-term management of learning result in consistently high standards of provision
- Teachers' very high expectations are matched to strong support for students so that most reach or exceed their targets
- The subject attracts a large number of students and they are very well supported in their learning
- Students show an exceptional willingness to work hard

Commentary

Examination results

161. Results at A-level in 2004 were above average. Girls did better than boys, but there has been no significant pattern over the past few years.

Standards and achievement

162. Students enter the sixth form with average standards and progress to above-average standards. Students are very positive about history and believe that they are doing well because teachers regularly 'go the last mile' for them, for example in offering high quality tutorials for individual studies. They achieve very well because teachers challenge them to do so and introduce issues in an interesting way. For example, a Year 12 lesson started with the question 'What's more important, what happened or people's perceptions of what happened?' As a result, students successfully considered a wide range of short- and long-term variables in a task where they evaluated Government responses to poverty in the nineteenth century.

Teaching and learning

163. The best features of teaching are its high pace, focus and challenge. Work is made interesting and is systematically organised to build on previous work and to challenge all students appropriately. The emphasis is firmly on rigour, but with enjoyment, and methods used are very active and engaging. Teachers' expert knowledge is very well interwoven with emphasis on meeting examination criteria, so that students are very well supported both in lessons and in the longer term. Teachers help students to develop high-level thinking through the searching analysis of very rewarding source materials. For example, in an excellent Year 13 lesson, all students took part in a debate on the policies of Gladstone and Disraeli, which resulted in sophisticated understanding for many. Students' willingness to learn responsibly and independently is exceptional, and several students from each year go on to take history at university. However, some students are highly teacher-dependent.

Leadership and management

164. The department is led and organised with drive and rigour. Leadership has a self-critical focus on improvement and all staff share aims and methods very effectively. Relationships are very strong, and all management systems work very well. The use of value added data is an area for further development. No judgement is possible on improvement since the last inspection for the sixth form.

Psychology

Provision in psychology is good.

	Years 12 and 13
Standards	Above average
Achievement	Good
Teaching and learning	Good
Leadership	Very good
Management	Very good
Progress since the last inspection	Not applicable

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good leadership and management have resulted in appropriate priorities for developing the subject
- The good planning of lessons helps students to work independently, while building their academic self-confidence
- Students' very good attitudes to work considerably enhance their achievement
- The quantity and range of library books are too limited to support the expected level of independent study

Commentary

Examination results

165. No students were prepared for A-level in 2004.

Standards and achievement

166. In Year 12, students acquire a comprehensive knowledge of research methods, and explain key terms accurately in response to well-focused teacher questioning. They apply these well to their own studies. Research methods are systematic and efficiently applied. In Year 13, students grasp theory readily. They define clearly the constituent elements of the main psychological approaches to learning. They use technical terms accurately, and their critical understanding is well demonstrated in discussions. For example, a class studying theories of learning very perceptively explained and evaluated the typical assumptions of the behaviourist approach and their application to school organisation.

Teaching and learning

167. Teachers display very good subject knowledge. They question students expertly to confirm and extend their knowledge and understanding. Students are very well motivated and show genuine interest in the topics they study. Lessons are challenging and students are well supported. As a result, they learn effectively and confidently to apply psychological concepts and design small-scale research projects. Well-planned lessons provide the right mixture of direct instruction to the whole class and independent practical work. The quantity and range of library books are at present too restricted to support the expected level of independent study and wider reading for the increased number of students now studying the subject.

Leadership and management

168. Leadership has established suitable priorities for developing this new subject in the school. Teachers are encouraged to play to their academic strengths. They work very well as a team to build up and share new resources and ideas to use in the classroom. Students' achievement and standards are thoroughly monitored and any student in danger of falling behind receives good support.

Religious education

Provision in religious education is very good.

	Years 12 and 13
Standards	Well above average
Achievement	Very good
Teaching and learning	Very good
Leadership	Good
Management	Very good
Progress since the last inspection	Good

Main strengths

- The examination results are excellent particularly in the proportion of highest grades
- Students are very well supported and prepared for examination questions
- Very good teaching challenges students to develop their thinking and analytical skills
- Students develop a sound base of information from which to revise

Commentary

Examination results

169. A-level results were well above average in 2004. All students gained at least an E grade and over 80 per cent gained A or B grades. Results were above average in 2003.

Standards and achievement

170. Students enter the course with varied levels of ability but most gained an A or B at GCSE. Assessments of their work show that they are achieving very well. The standard of their written and oral work is consistent with high performance in the examinations. In an essay on the argument for the existence of God, students displayed a very good command of the views of various philosophers and expressed well-reasoned personal responses to the issues raised. In an excellent Year 12 lesson on conscience, students showed they could think analytically and reflectively on ethical dilemmas, such as the potential conflict of conscience in current ethical issues for Anglican priests and the topical concept of intelligent design.

Teaching and learning

171. Lively teaching encourages students and challenges them to expand the scope of their thinking, in paired work and class debate. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and are enthusiastic about what they teach. Students respond well to these qualities. Teachers are skilled at leading students to greater understanding through discussion, and they strike a good balance between providing information and expecting students to think and find out things for themselves. Some students show evidence of wide reading around the topics. Students in a Year 13 lesson showed a very full recall of previous work. Relationships in the groups are very good and students work well together and respond thoughtfully to the challenges their teachers set them. Their files contain a solid basis of information for revision.

Leadership and management

172. The work of the department is very efficiently organised. An innovative twilight session has been introduced to extend the scope of the department's work. The process of organising the new coursework requirement has been very well managed. Teachers feel well supported by the subject's leadership and a high level of collaboration is achieved. The teaching staff are deployed to make the best use of their particular areas of expertise and encouraged to share their strengths with others in a developmental way. Very good standards and results have been sustained and numbers opting for the course are higher than is usually the case.

ENGINEERING, TECHNOLOGY AND MANUFACTURING

The focus of the inspection was on the A-level product design course. The A-level in food was sampled, where teachers have an excellent subject knowledge which extends students' knowledge and skills to enable them to achieve above-average results. Students work very well independently and have a sound understanding of the commercial production of foods. During the practical lesson seen, students used a range of technological equipment successfully to ensure that they could plan and test for in their food products.

Design and technology

Provision in systems and control is very good.

The department offers two courses in design and technology, one on resistant materials and one on systems and control.

	Years 12 and 13
Standards	Above average
Achievement	Excellent
Teaching and learning	Excellent

Leadership	Very good
Management	Very good
Progress since the last inspection	Very good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve very well because of the excellent teaching, very good guidance and support from specialists
- Tasks are interesting and challenging and prepare them well for higher education and employment
- Some students do not make visits to local and regional design and manufacturing companies to enrich their studies
- Computer-aided design and manufacturing is integrated very well into the practical projects

Commentary

Examination results

173. A-level results were above average in 2004. The electronics course is popular with boys and their results have improved over the last three years.

Standards and achievement

174. Students start the course with varied experiences. Not all those studying electronics in Year 12 have studied GCSE electronics. These students are given confidence and the necessary extra tuition by staff to allow them to catch up with others quickly. Students attain high standards in practical work. Students in Year 13 undertake interesting and challenging projects that include designing and making an anemometer, a test bench for finding the focal length of photographic lenses, and innovative functional furniture. They develop a good range of skills and a thorough understanding of the materials they use and the processes involved in design and manufacture. Year 12 students solved high-level designing and technological problems when working on an innovative solar panel experiment box for use in schools in developing countries, and a water-cooled system for computer motherboards. They showed a mature understanding when discussing related moral, social and environmental problems, for example associated with the life cycle of products. Where students had made direct contact with a manufacturer in their product analysis investigations they achieved very high standards. Other students who conducted mainly Internet research did not gain sufficient knowledge and appreciation of manufacturing processes. The sophistication of the design portfolios varied widely. The best used very creative drawing and subtle watercolour illustration.

Teaching and learning

175. The excellent subject knowledge and practical skills of teachers and technicians ensures that students have very constructive support when working. An expert from industry provides valuable assistance for students studying the electronic and control systems course. All students have the opportunity to use advanced computer-aided design software to design parts of their projects. They receive very good guidance that enables them to learn effectively when using the up-to-date computer-aided manufacturing equipment to produce their components. ICT is used very well to produce accomplished design portfolios and product analysis reports. Digital photography has been incorporated very effectively to aid the explanation of processes. Students have a clear understanding of what is required because assessment is closely linked to examination requirements, teachers are aware of students' interests and, as a result, provide them with good guidance.

Leadership and management

176. Day-to-day organisation of the department is very thorough. The teaching team is deployed very effectively to make the best use of their wide range of specialisms. Since the last inspection, the leadership has changed. A significant recent development is the enhanced provision for computer-aided manufacturing.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

The school is in its second year of teaching media studies. In 2004, AS level results were above the national average. The lesson observed was of an excellent standard. The focus of the inspection was on A-level art and design. The teacher organised the lesson very well and prepared the group thoroughly for the task. As a result, learning of high quality took place. All students were engaged completely. They were encouraged to express their opinions and a high level of debate took place between them. The standard of their oral work was excellent.

Art and design

Provision in art and design is very good.

	Years 12 and 13
Standards	Above average
Achievement	Very good
Teaching and learning	Very good
Leadership	Very good
Management	Very good
Progress since the last inspection	Good

Main strengths

- Very strong teaching, across the very broad curriculum, incorporates a high level of challenge that leads to all students achieving very well
- Leadership provides a very good role model and this is maintaining high standards
- Students' learning springs from very good individual tuition that responds to students' separate needs

Commentary

Examination results

177. In 2004, A-level results were above the national average.

Standards and achievement

178. Students join A-level courses with varied previous attainment. Art is popular and numbers are increasing as a result of the range of courses offered. A significant number gain grades A and B in ceramics, fine art and textiles, making achievement very good. The department is closely focused on examination requirements and students receive methodical and individual support. Work is constantly refined and reviewed. Standards of work in progress were above average, especially when influences from the work of artists had been used experimentally and incorporated with students' good quality observational drawings. Above-average standards are very well supported by students' acquisition of high levels of technical expertise across all the disciplines.

Teaching and learning

179. Teaching is very good, and sometimes excellent. Teaching is vigorous and students benefit from the teachers' enthusiasm and commitment. In the best lessons, teaching is inspirational and leads to excellent learning. Students regularly exceed their predicted grades. Students are confident and develop highly individual styles of working when challenged by ambitious, open-ended topics. They develop extensive knowledge of the works and ideas of contemporary artists. They cleverly apply these influences using good technical expertise. Very good learning is supported by well-organised individual tutorial sessions. This approach broadens students' understanding of what opportunities are available for improving their work. Extra-curricular opportunities, like visits to galleries in Liverpool and Leeds, enhance school-based learning very well. Individual assessment is a vital part of extending learning. The very effective system includes evaluation that sets demanding agreed targets for students, which reflect teachers' high expectations and harnesses students' high levels of motivation. Students' attitudes are very good and relationships are very productive.

Leadership and management

180. An especially strong team is very well led, directed and supported. Recent developments include media studies as part of an already broad curriculum. Teaching is very well organised and teachers work together very effectively. The liaison that takes place ensures that, firstly, there is complete coverage of the scheme of work, and secondly, that all teachers understand the relevance of their contribution. Many students apply to study art and related craft courses in higher education. They get very good support from the department's leadership and management. Recruitment on to courses in 2004 saw a massive increase and has been very well managed. Improvement since the previous report has been good because high standards have been maintained.

Music

Provision for music is excellent.

	Years 12 and 13
Standards	Very high
Achievement	Excellent
Teaching and learning	Excellent
Leadership	Excellent
Management	Excellent
Progress since the last inspection	Very good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Excellent provision is made both for traditional musicians and for those studying music technology

- Independent learning is well supported, which provides excellent preparation for future study
- Excellent ensembles provide students with many opportunities to perform
- Substantial and varied use is made of ICT for composing and arranging
- Staff are versatile and accomplished and set very high standards in all aspects of provision
- Accommodation is cramped and limits developments, particularly in music technology

Commentary

Examination results

181. A-level results in 2004 were well above average with 80 per cent of students gaining A or B and all gaining a pass.

Standards and achievement

182. Students are accomplished practical musicians, although not all have taken GCSE music. They reach an extremely high standard of work in all aspects of the course. They talk knowledgeably about music through the ages, as well as demonstrating an in-depth knowledge of chosen composers. Composition is a strength and students produce music in distinctive styles, influenced by composers as varied as Mike Oldfield and Rachmaninov or drawing on diverse influences, such as pop or Irish folk music. Their compositions, whether for the electric guitar quartet or a twenty five piece brass band show a strong harmonic grasp combined with creativity and flair. They use computer programmes very effectively to assist them. Students taking the new course in music technology work to an exceptional standard and show excellent achievement in the varied activities, such as sequencing, recording and mixing.

Teaching and learning

183. Teachers use their experience and knowledge of the subject to encourage students' independence. Regular and continuous assessment takes place within a climate of very good relationships. Students have an outstandingly positive attitude to their work. They are strongly focused on improvement and success. Learning is made enjoyable and performance, whether solo, ensemble, choir or orchestral, is encouraged, with students showing support for each other. The teaching of music technology is excellent, and students can learn independently out of hours as well as during lessons and they use ICT confidently and artistically. The excellent quality of teaching of music technology has allowed students to make very rapid progress despite the lack of a studio and lack of access to the equipment during the school day. Students work independently before and after school.

Leadership and management

184. Organisation of the three permanent teachers and fourteen peripatetic staff is meticulous, and the complex programme of rehearsals, individual tuition and class lessons runs smoothly. The school provides a very good preparation for students who wish to pursue music courses at universities or colleges of music. Strategic planning is very effective, and the curriculum is very well planned to take account of the limited facilities and unsatisfactory accommodation. The department plans continuing expansion of its activities to provide more fully for students of non-orchestral instruments and music technology. Current accommodation is limited and providing a barrier to the expansions which the department has the capacity and desire to effect. The school has maintained very high standards since the last inspection and significantly expanded the scope of its activities since then.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

Sports science

Provision in sports science is excellent.

	Years 12 and 13
Standards	Very high
Achievement	Excellent
Teaching and learning	Excellent
Leadership	Excellent
Management	Excellent

Progress since the last inspection	Very good
------------------------------------	-----------

Main strengths

- The wide range of teachers' skills enables an outstanding programme of activities to take place
- Results are consistently well above average
- Students value highly the sporting, academic and social aspects of sports provision
- Excellent use is made of ICT to analyse and improve performance

Commentary

Examination results

185. A-level results were well above average in 2004, as they had been in 2003.

Standards and achievement

186. Students achieve very well from their starting points in Year 12. Not all have previously studied the subject at GCSE level. By Year 13, students achieve excellently showing very high standards in all aspects of the course. They experiment, and analyse performance to improve their physical skills. They collect data and relate theory and practical work exceptionally well. Students develop advanced study skills during the course. They are extremely competent at planning and researching for essays. Academic resources, including books and ICT are readily available. They use technical terms accurately and contribute to well-informed discussions, for example about differences in fitness and heart rate amongst different groups of people. They understand the moral and social implications of the behaviour of well-known sportsmen and the problems of racism in sport. Talented team players attain very high standards because of the excellent opportunities within the extra-curricular programme. They are encouraged to join clubs and perform at local, regional and national level in a variety of sports. Lower-attaining students, and borderline pass students, achieve as well as others because of the targeted support they receive.

Teaching and learning

187. Lessons are characterised by the outstanding commitment of the teachers and the students' very high levels of motivation. Teachers have extensive knowledge of individual activities and of examination requirements. They challenge and extend students' practical capabilities and their understanding. In most lessons, students are involved in very productive question-and-answer sessions, which extend their understanding very effectively. Teachers have high expectations of students' preparation, contributions and responsibility for their individual learning, exemplified by the high standards seen in the fitness programmes developed in students' chosen sports and this helps to embed learning and encourage high standards. Students are very positive about the value of the course. They appreciate its academic and sporting aspects and the many social benefits they encounter, including worthwhile opportunities to lead younger students.

Leadership and management

188. Teachers' varied strengths enable a very wide programme of curricular and extra-curricular activities to be organised into a very comprehensive schedule. Planning and organisation are excellent. Teachers provide very good role models. They give their free time generously for matches and tours. They attend courses regularly to help to develop the quality and range of provision. Very good systems of targeting and monitoring students' progress enable teachers to provide expert guidance for individual students. Results have remained well above average since the last inspection. Teaching methods and the range of activities have developed very well. A particular strength is now the use of analysis, often using ICT and cameras, to study and improve performance.

BUSINESS

The focus of the inspection was on A-level business studies.

Provision in business studies is very good.

	Years 12 and 13
Standards	Well above average
Achievement	Very good
Teaching and learning	Very good
Leadership	Very good
Management	Very good
Progress since the last inspection	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students make very good progress in relation to their starting points on the course
- Students show good skills in analysing varied business methods
- Specialist teachers combine their academic and business backgrounds well
- Teaching and learning make very good use of the Internet
- The innovative 'blended-learning approach' enables students to begin AS level courses in Year 13
- Students often have good opportunities for independent work, but teaching sometimes allows insufficient opportunities for discussion

Commentary

Results

189. Results in 2004 were well above the national average.

Standards and achievement

190. Standards seen during the inspection reflected the previous well-above-average results. Students explain why effective communication is so important to business. They identify different communication methods and point out potential problems. They proficiently analyse business methods. They suggest suitable strategies for developing different businesses, for example analysing information about companies ranging from a Chinese restaurant to a major bank known for its ethical policies.

Teaching and learning:

191. Teaching is consistently stimulating and enthusiastic, and reflects the expert knowledge of the teachers. In a very successful lesson introducing students to the European Union, the acquisition of knowledge was combined very well with the building up of students' skills through the application of business management techniques such as SWOT analysis (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats). A data projector was used effectively and the very good use of a variety of resources enabled students to build a valuable set of notes. In another very worthwhile lesson, the strong focus on assessment was central to the success of a lesson that focused on a most up-to-date business report requiring students to devise a business strategy for a Plymouth theatre. The teacher knew the strengths and weaknesses of the group very well. Students use the Internet methodically to discover information. For example, a lesson was observed where students independently selected the most appropriate websites to research a report on how businesses would be affected by the adoption of the euro in the United Kingdom. Students are extremely appreciative of the teaching they receive and feel very well supported and guided. They are clear about how they are doing and what they need to do to improve. Within the context of challenging teaching, lessons can occasionally be teacher-dominated so that students do

not have sufficient opportunities for discussion. Trips and visits enhance learning very well giving students the opportunity to make sense of business theory.

Leadership and management

192. The subject is popular, successful and well established with good resources. The specialisms of staff are well matched to the curriculum. Teachers form an extremely effective team. The department has developed an innovative approach in establishing a 'blended learning' approach enabling students to begin an AS course in Year 13 through a mix of computer-based learning materials and individual tutorials. The department plans to enable members of the community to have access to the course by this means. The Young Enterprise programme is popular, successful and available to students whether or not they are studying A-level business studies. Good links with the business community exist through the appointment of business advisers.

PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT AND GENERAL PROGRAMMES

193. There was no focus subject in this area but the A/AS course in general studies was sampled. General studies is a core subject in Years 12 and 13 with students choosing the sessions they attend to complement their other subjects. Year 12 chose from mathematics, media, politics and current affairs, physical science and technology. In Year 13, the choices range through social values and social issues, environment, interaction of science, philosophy and religion, spatial awareness, human and scientific development, introduction to linguistics, literature with language and the arts. In the Year 13 lesson visited, students achieved well as they worked cooperatively to consider literary techniques used by authors in poetry. Good questioning by the teacher enabled students to analyse three poems. In the Year 12 lesson observed, students engaged in a very good debate concerning the advantages and disadvantages of nuclear energy. Results vary. They were average in 2004 and well above in 2003.

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

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