

INSPECTION REPORT

Longbenton Community College

Newcastle-upon-Tyne

LEA area: North Tyneside

Unique Reference Number: 108645

Principal: Mr J Cockburn

Lead inspector: Dr D A W Biltcliffe

Dates of inspection: 13th-16th September 2004

Inspection number: 268849

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	11-18
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	880
School address:	Hailsham Avenue Longbenton Newcastle-upon-Tyne Tyne and Wear
Postcode:	NE12 8ER
Telephone number:	0191-200-7474
Fax number:	0191-200-7850
Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr T Goodwin
Date of previous inspection:	1 st - 5 th March 1999

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

This comprehensive school is smaller than average and educates about 434 boys and 446 girls aged 11-18. It has a sixth form of around 103 students. It is designated as a specialist Technology College and has a strong community emphasis in its work. Both pupils' social and economic background and their overall attainment on entry at 11 are broadly average. About 96 per cent of pupils are white. The proportion of pupils identified as having special educational needs (SEN) is a little below the national norm; the proportion with official SEN statements is around the national average. No pupils are at an early stage of learning English. In 2003-2004, about seven per cent of pupils joined or left the school other than at the usual time at the beginning or end of the school year. The school gained a *School Achievement Award* from the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) in 2003.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
1025	Dr D A W Biltcliffe	Lead inspector	
9034	Ms J W Biltcliffe	Lay inspector	
13452	Mr H Meggitt	Lay inspector	
11479	Mr J A Paine	Team inspector	English; drama
30576	Mr P Bannon	Team inspector	Mathematics
4607	Dr D E Ward	Team inspector	Science (<i>except sixth-form physics</i>)
2048	Mr R D Masterton	Team inspector	Physics (<i>sixth form</i>)
11190	Dr W M Burke	Team inspector	Art; design and technology
8645	Dr J D Ward	Team inspector	Citizenship; music
8873	Ms C Evers	Team inspector	Geography; history
12470	Mr B M Greasley	Team inspector	Geography (<i>sixth form</i>)
17923	Mr M Shaw	Team inspector	Information and communication technology
4829	Mr I H C Waters	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages
13217	Mr M D Butterworth	Team inspector	Physical education
10448	Mr M F Elson	Team inspector	Religious education
1819	Mr R H Crowther	Team inspector	Business education; economics; psychology
22046	Dr J Jolliffe	Team inspector	Special educational needs

The inspection contractor was:

Tribal PPI
 Barley House
 Oakfield Grove
 Clifton
 Bristol
 BS8 2BN

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

This comprehensive school of 880 boys and girls, on the outskirts of Newcastle-upon-Tyne, was inspected on 13th-16th September 2004 by an inspection team led by Dr D A W Biltcliffe.

OVERALL EVALUATION

This is an effective school in nearly all aspects of its work. By the end of Year 11, pupils' overall attainment is broadly average. The school's standards are improving faster than in most schools nationally. Most pupils achieve satisfactorily, although high attainers could do better. Sixth formers achieve well. The school's teaching and learning are good. Most pupils have good attendance, but lesson punctuality could be better. With few exceptions, pupils show good attitudes and behave well (often very well). There is a friendly, caring, all-inclusive atmosphere around the school. Parents rightly value highly what the school offers their children. Senior management gives a clear lead and steer. The school gives satisfactory value for money in Years 7-11, but the sixth form (though good) costs much more than its income. This good school has many more strengths than weaknesses.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Academic standards are rising at a faster rate than they are nationally.
- Most students do well in the sixth form – a good place to study.
- Teaching is good: around one in four lessons is very good (and occasionally excellent).
- In GCSE, English is strong. Year 11 attainment is well above average in art.
- Science, modern foreign languages and GCSE physical education (PE) can do better.
- The starting arrangements for Year 7 and guidance for Years 10-11 are very good.
- The headteacher gives very clear, effective leadership.

Since its last inspection in 1999, the school has made satisfactory progress overall. Its 2004 GCSE results, for example, were much higher than they were at the time of the last inspection. The Year 13 Advanced-level results, too, were good. Despite some slippage in progress in the past, most pupils now achieve satisfactorily. In GCSE, results are better than those in many schools with a similar social and economic background. Teaching quality has remained good – even slightly better than five years ago. Leadership and management have focused – and usually with much success – on improving weaknesses. Pupils like the school.

The school has made satisfactory improvement in most of the main weaknesses identified in 1999 – especially in most examination results, the amount of teaching time, daily collective worship and toilet provision. Attention is still needed to timetabling and sixth-form cost-effectiveness.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

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

Pupils' overall achievement is satisfactory. In 2003, pupils' overall level of attainment was average by the end of Year 9. Although some pupils underachieved, this was a fair achievement overall, taking into account pupils' average standard on entry in Year 7. Pupils' GCSE performance in 2003 was close to average. This was a fairish achievement, with again some slippage from Year 9's performance two years earlier. The 2004 performance was better – and a sound achievement. Of the three core subjects, English and mathematics did well, but science lagged behind. The

current standard of work by the end of Year 11 is average overall. It is well above average in art, above average in English, design and technology, geography, information and communication technology (ICT) and music, and below average in science, history and (GCSE) PE.

Pupils' personal qualities are developed well. Pupils' relationships with others and their sense of responsibility are fostered very well and successfully – a strength of the school. Staff are good role models. Pupils' moral and social development are very good. Spiritual awareness is carefully deepened. Cultural development is good. Most pupils attend well. Lesson punctuality on this extensive site is not good enough and requires timetabling changes. The school achieves its high expectations of pupils' conduct.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of pupils' education is good. Teaching is good overall and in most subjects. It is another strength of the school. It is nearly always well planned, interesting and firmly managed. In a few cases it is undemanding. Throughout Years 7-11 it is very good in art, but only satisfactory in citizenship and modern foreign languages. Most pupils put in an effort and want to do well.

The curriculum is good. It is broad and balanced and meets statutory requirements, including those for religious education (RE) and collective worship. The needs of pupils with special educational needs are well met, but pupils of higher ability could, not infrequently, do better. The arrangements for the induction of new pupils are very successful. Although there are a few health and safety issues to put right, the school's provision for pupils' care and welfare is very good overall.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The school's **leadership and management are good.** The school is well organised and runs smoothly. The principal's leadership is very good. Management is effective overall, but requires more accurate information about its key tasks and performance. The governing body is satisfactory: governors support the school well, but their strategic direction and monitoring are light.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Those parents whose views are known believe that the school is doing a very good job overall. Just a few have concerns about behaviour and the range of extracurricular activities. Nearly all pupils say Longbenton is a good school and that they are well taught. Behaviour, respectful treatment and homework are of concern to some pupils. Inspectors judge behaviour to be good in most lessons and around the school. Homework is usually reasonably set, but is not based on a consistent plan. The school is very popular overall with parents. Most pupils and students rate the school well.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Raise the overall level of pupils' attainment and achievement by ensuring that:
 - ~ high-ability pupils are always well taught and tracked for progress throughout Years 7-11;
 - ~ the proportion of top grades obtained in GCSE at least matches the national average;
 - ~ boys achieve more – and especially those of above average ability;
 - ~ achievement is raised in GCSE science and PE; and
 - ~ greater attention is paid to the range and quality of classroom discussions and oral presentations.
- Ensure that the school has a comprehensive, accurate and coherent management information system to guide its work and analyse its performance.
- Increase the cost-effectiveness of the sixth form by implementing efficient ways of teaching small groups.
- Improve pupils' punctuality for lessons by (especially) making appropriate changes to the structure of the teaching day.

THE SIXTH FORM AT LONGBENTON COMMUNITY COLLEGE

A good range of GCE AS-level, A-level and vocational courses is offered on the school's site and, through a consortium, at two other schools in the area in this sixth form of 103 students.

OVERALL EVALUATION

The overall effectiveness of sixth-form provision is good. In 2003, GCE A-level grade quality was average. 2004 saw further improvement: at A (A2) level, the pass rate and grade quality were good and students' total "points scores" were above the 2003 national average. Most students achieve well. Of the 11 main subjects inspected, provision is good in mathematics, design and technology, geography, history, ICT, business studies and economics. It is very good in English, biology and psychology. It is satisfactory in physics. Teaching is usually good (or better) – as it was in 85 per cent of the lessons seen. Most students learn in a mature, adult way, justifying carefully their points of view. The sixth form is managed satisfactorily: it runs effectively, but is far from being cost effective. The consortium arrangement with two other schools gives the bonus of extended choice of subjects to students.

The main strengths and weaknesses are:

- A-level results were average in 2003. They were higher (and a good achievement) in 2004.
- Most sixth formers achieve well - a tribute to students' efforts and consistently good teaching.
- The consortium arrangements open up a wide range of courses and increase subject viability.
- Teaching was good in half the lessons seen and very good in a quarter of them.
- Three lessons in mathematics, art, and design and technology were outstanding.
- Provision is very good in English, art, biology and psychology.
- Extension and recreational opportunities are good, but not coherently marketed.
- Many students feel the need for better guidance on their post-school future.
- The sixth form is not cost effective and requires a clear development plan to achieve this.
- The sixth form is regarded by students as a good place to study.

QUALITY AND STANDARDS IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES OF THE CURRICULUM

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

Curriculum area	Evaluation
English, languages and communication	English literature is very good. The encouragement and challenge of very good teaching ensures a good level of results and achievement.
Mathematics	Good provision in mathematics . Most students achieve well as a result of thorough, interesting and skilful teaching.
Science	Provision in biology is very good: average results and good achievement from enthusiastic, well-planned teaching. Provision in physics is satisfactory. Students make sound progress as a result of good teaching and an innovative course.
Information & communication technology (ICT)	Provision in ICT is good. Knowledgeable, helpful teaching ensures that students achieve well on this thoughtfully chosen course.
Humanities	Geography is good. Standards are consistently above average. Teaching is carefully planned. Students are well motivated and achieve well. Provision in history is good. Consistently good teaching and very positive attitudes from students secure above average results. Psychology is very good. Lessons in this popular subject are lively, varied and well planned. Students' progress is carefully monitored.

Engineering, technology and manufacturing

Product design is good. The course is characterised by good quality teaching and coursework. Examination results are average.

Business

Business studies is good – clear, well-paced teaching in a well-resourced department. Results are broadly average.

Provision in **economics is good.** Students achieve well through generally good teaching, careful planning, good resources and regular monitoring.

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

ADVICE, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

Students are provided with a sound level of care and support. They generally display pleasant maturity. Most are satisfied with the level and nature of the guidance they receive, but one third of those whose views are known feel that they would have liked more pre-sixth course advice and around two-fifths would like better advice on their after-school options.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE SIXTH FORM

These aspects are satisfactory overall. The sixth form runs smoothly and students achieve well. In contrast, sixth-form teaching is not monitored and overall provision, despite consortium arrangements and such imaginative aspects as video-conferencing, is not cost effective. Leadership and management are good in most sixth-form subjects. Leadership is very good in English, biology, art, history and psychology. It is satisfactory in physics and geography. Sixth-form attendance was satisfactory last academic year in Year 13, but unsatisfactorily below 90 per cent in Year 12. The learning climate for sixth formers is good, a point they well appreciate.

STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Those students whose views are known regard the school favourably. All enjoy being in the sixth form, think the courses available meet their requirements and feel that they are treated well. Nearly all regard the quality and styles of teaching as just right for them. Three-quarters view homework positively. Advice on sixth-form courses, guidance on post-school work or education, personal support and enrichment activities are, however, given lower ratings. Inspectors judge that these aspects, taken together, are satisfactory overall and typical of the provision made in other schools. Overall, students enjoy – and benefit greatly from – being a sixth former at this school.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE MAIN INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in subjects and courses

Pupils' standard of attainment is, overall, in line with that expected nationally by the end of both Year 9 and Year 11. This is a satisfactory achievement, bearing in mind pupils' average standard on entry to the school. In 2003, pupils' level of attainment was broadly average in both the Year 9 national tests and GCSE examinations. These were fairish achievements, but could have been higher. In 2004, the GCSE results were higher than in 2003 and represented a satisfactory achievement. They were higher than they were at the last inspection. Current achievement is satisfactory overall. This is a steadily improving school.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Examination results are better than usually found in schools with a similar background.
- They have been rising, too, at a faster rate than is nationally the case.
- Pupils' GCSE achievement was fairish in 2003, but satisfactory overall in 2004.
- Pupils tended to do better in 2003 in GCSE English and worse in science, French and German.
- The proportion of pupils gaining the highest GCSE grade (A*) is lower than it should be.
- In 2004, Year 13 results at A-level were strong. Most students achieved well.
- Attainment by the end of Year 11 is well above average in art.
- It is below average in science, history and in the GCSE course in PE.

Commentary

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	33.5 (35.3)	33.4 (33.3)
mathematics	36.1 (35.1)	35.4 (34.7)
science	33.5 (33.7)	33.6 (33.3)

There were 148 pupils in the year group. The figures in brackets are for 2002.

1. Pupils' overall standard of attainment on entry in Year 7 is usually around average (as in 2003) and occasionally (as in 2000) above average. In 2003, the overall standard reached in the Year 9 national tests was average. The proportion of pupils who reached the basic Level 5 was, however, slightly above average: mathematics had the best result. In 2004, mathematics improved further, whereas English and science declined a little. The proportion of pupils attaining the higher Level 6 was average in 2001 and 2003, but above average in 2000 and 2002.

2. When these 2003 Year 9 results are compared with those in schools which have a similar economic background (as measured only by the proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals), pupils in this school performed well above the group average. Although a comparison of the 2003 results with the standards pupils had on entry to the school indicates that pupils did not quite make the progress they could have done, the school's results have, since 1999, improved at a faster rate than the rise in results nationally. Girls tend to be ahead of boys in English by the end of Year 9, but boys did slightly better than girls in 2003 in both mathematics and science.

3. By the end of Year 9, the overall level of attainment seen in lessons and other current work is average* in most subjects. It is above average in mathematics and art. Pupils' progress and achievement in their studies over Years 7-9 are currently satisfactory overall. They make good

progress and achieve well in mathematics, design and technology, geography, history, information and communication technology (ICT), music and religious education (RE). They do very well in art. Achievement is unsatisfactory in science.

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

	School results	National results
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-C grades	45 (47)	52 (50)
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	90 (94)	91 (91)
Percentage of pupils gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	94 (96)	96 (96)
Average point score per pupil (best eight subjects)	32.6 (34.9)	34.7 (34.8)

There were 162 pupils in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for 2002.

4. In the GCSE examinations of 2003, pupils' overall attainment was broadly in line with the national average. Over the five years since the last inspection, GCSE results have risen at a faster rate than they have nationally, albeit it from a lowish base in 1999. The 2003 results indicate a little slippage over Years 10 and 11. The 2004 results, in contrast, were the school's best ever and represent a satisfactory overall achievement. Further improvement is, however, possible, especially amongst high-ability pupils (particularly boys).

5. In the core subjects, pupils' attainment of a grade in the range A*-C in GCSE in 2003 was above average in English, average in mathematics, but below average in science. The proportion of pupils gaining at least grade C in all of English, mathematics and science in 2003 (34 per cent) was a little below the national average of 38 per cent. The 2004 results in English (75 per cent of Year 11 gaining A*-C grades) and mathematics (63 per cent) are a good achievement. Science results (35 per cent) remained low.

6. When pupils' performances in all the subjects they take in GCSE are compared with one another, pupils have tended to do better in English than in most of their other subjects, but worse in science, French and German. In 2003, in the three core subjects, no pupil achieved the highest A* grade in mathematics and just two did so in science; eight did so in English language. At this level, boys did poorly, gaining just one A* grade (in English), in contrast to 41 gained by girls. In 2004, only three boys obtained an A* grade and the girls' total was 16. A greater proportion of pupils have the potential for high grades – a key management task to achieve in the future.

7. When the school's results at GCSE are compared with those in schools with a similar "free school meals" background, this school's performance was better than most others in the group in 2003. When, however, the results are compared with the standards the same pupils had reached earlier in the Year 9 national tests, quite a few pupils did not maintain a satisfactory rate of progress over Years 10 and 11. Absenteeism was one important factor. Girls achieved a greater proportion of the higher (A*-C) grades in GCSE than boys in 2003 and 2004. The school exceeded the reasonable GCSE targets it set for itself in the 2004 examinations.

8. The proportion of pupils currently on target to reach the nationally expected standards in subjects by the end of Year 11 is average overall. It is, however, above average in English, geography and ICT, well above average in art, but below average in science, history and the GCSE course in PE. Pupils with special educational needs achieve soundly overall. They achieve well particularly in Years 7-9 through the extra literacy and numeracy support they receive as well as from the effective help of the Learning Support team. As a result, they make good progress towards their individual targets and gain full benefit from other subjects. The most able could achieve more overall.

* "Average" in relation to classwork means that the standard of work is typical of what pupils of the same age produce nationally.

9. Pupils' level of achievement was sound overall during the inspection. In three out of every five lessons observed, pupils achieved well (and occasionally very well indeed). Their achievement was satisfactory in a further one third of lessons. Achievement was, however, unsatisfactory in just three of the 74 lessons observed in Years 7-9, but in around one in seven lessons in Years 10-11.

10. Teaching quality is the main factor in pupils' achievement. Pupils do well when their teachers give interesting, challenging lessons that make them think hard, pay attention to detail and explain their views accurately (orally or in writing). They do not make the progress they should when work is superficial or slow.

11. Across the school, pupils' standard of literacy is average overall. High attainers often produce high quality, extended writing in geography and history, whereas presentation, writing and the basics of grammar are, overall, a little below average in these subjects and science. Speaking varies very widely from clear articulation to quiet mumbling, but is a little below average overall. It requires more practice. Sustained, interactive class discussion is a weakness, but most pupils listen well.

12. Competence in numeracy is above average in Years 7-9 and average overall in Years 10-11. Pupils generally handle numbers soundly in most of their work. Attainment in ICT is above average as a result of good facilities and quality teaching: most pupils capably use a wide range of ICT applications.

Sixth form

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

	School results	National results
Percentage of entries gaining A-E grades	91 (94)	89 (93)
Percentage of entries gaining A-B grades	22 (43)	33 (35)
Average point score per pupil	254 (270)	258 (263)

There were 38 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for 2002.

13. The GCE Advanced (A2) level results in 2003 were close to average. This was true for both the average points that pupils gained per subject and for the quality of grades obtained. The pass rate was very slightly higher than the national figure.

14. In 2004, the A2 results were significantly higher and a good performance. Taking into account the quality of grades that they had previously gained in GCSE examinations, most students make good progress in their studies to A-level. On the subject grades that could be directly compared, students made good (or better) progress in nearly two-thirds of their subjects and satisfactory progress in almost a third. They rarely made unsatisfactory progress. This is a good picture of academic achievement.

15. The GCE Advanced Supplementary (AS) level results show a different picture. They were above average in 2003 on all the usual range of measures, but fell in 2004. All students passed in 2004 in biology, geography, history, French and music. The pass rate was below 70 per cent in design and technology.

16. The standard of sixth-form work seen during the inspection was above average and well in line with course requirements in English, science, design and technology, geography, business education, economics and psychology, well above average in art, and average in mathematics and history. Students' key skills of literacy, numeracy and ICT capability are similar to those found nationally. The climate for learning is good and students achieve well during their time in the sixth form.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Attendance is satisfactory. Punctuality for school is good, but often unsatisfactory for lessons. Attitudes and behaviour around the school generally, but especially in lessons, are almost invariably good. Relationships are very good. Provision for personal development is good overall and very good in the moral and social dimensions. In the sixth form, the school helps students well to grow into mature, young adults. The level of permanent exclusion is well above average, but is carried out reasonably.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school successfully promotes very good relationships.
- Its also achieves its high expectations of pupils' conduct.
- Pupils are well protected from bullying and other forms of harassment.
- The school is very good at developing pupils' capacity to distinguish right from wrong.
- Pupils show a very strong sense of living responsibly together in a community.
- Independent learning through homework could be better organised.
- Punctuality for lessons is not good enough.

Commentary

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

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	8.4	School data	1.5
National data	7.2	National data	1.1

The table gives the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year. The "National Data" comparison is for the 2002-2003 academic year, the latest year for which national data are available.

17. The attendance of most pupils is good, but the poor attendance of a minority brings down the overall figure. As a result, the overall level of attendance was satisfactory in the last academic year (at 90.1 per cent) and slightly below the pattern nationally. It was also lower than the good level of 92.1 per cent at the last inspection and lower than in any of the intervening years – and especially the 94.4 per cent achieved in 1999-2000.

18. There were several reasons for the drop in attendance in the last academic year. In the spring term of 2004, the school accepted 17 pupils who had been excluded from other secondary schools. The subsequent attendance of these pupils was low (only 47 per cent overall). Furthermore, the accuracy of statistics was compromised by the change-over of computerised recording systems and its associated teething problems from February 2004. The accuracy of recent statistics is therefore uncertain. The underlying attendance record of the majority of pupils remains good. In the autumn term of 2003, for example, the overall rate of attendance was very good at 94.5 per cent in Years 7-9.

19. The school puts much effort into securing good attendance. Its efforts are spearheaded by senior management, committed pastoral staff, its own proactive education welfare officer and, for example, by a "call home" system on the first day of absence. It incorporates well-targeted guidance to pupils in its *Student Planner*, although it does not give enough attention to attendance matters in its *Prospectus*. Truancy is not a problem.

20. Punctuality for school is good. In contrast, punctuality for lessons is no better than satisfactory. It is unsatisfactory in a significant minority of lessons. This is largely because of the long distance that many pupils (and sometimes staff) inevitably have to travel between lessons on this very extended site – a problem highlighted at the last inspection. Too little progress has been

made on implementing potential solutions for minimising the problem and addressing the consequent loss of teaching time and lesson focus.

21. Attitudes and behaviour, particularly in lessons but also around the school generally, are good overall, often very good and sometimes excellent. This feature of school life is a strength of the school. In just a small proportion of lessons, attitudes and behaviour are only satisfactory and, very occasionally, unsatisfactory. Pupils show good interest in school life and in the range of activities provided for them. Their willingness to be enterprising and take responsibility is also good.

22. Most parents agree that the school achieves high standards of behaviour and that their children are protected from bullying or harassment. Pupils admit that some bullying (mostly verbal) occurs in school, but they are confident that the school deals with it effectively. The school has successfully created a community in which individuals feel valued and ready to focus on the task of learning.

23. The good attitudes and behaviour are the result of some very good features of the school's provision. The school is very good not only at setting high expectations for pupils' conduct, but also at ensuring that pupils achieve them. It is also very effective in promoting pupils' respect for other people. This leads to very positive relationships not only among pupils but also between pupils and teachers.

24. Although pupils show appropriate levels of confidence in the classroom, the school has rightly identified the need to continue to work at raising pupils' individual self-esteem. The development in pupils of regular habits of independent learning, through more systematic use of homework, represents a further area for improvement.

25. The introduction in recent years of a system of behaviour support within the school has reduced the need for fixed-term exclusion. Although the level of permanent exclusion in the last academic year was well above average, exclusion was used appropriately. Additionally, the *Excellence in Cities* partnership has recently opened a local centre with a specialist team to work with pupils who would otherwise be permanently excluded.

26. The school is a community in which pupils learn about the nature of society and develop social skills very well. The culture of the school is one where respect for others is heavily and successfully emphasised. Religious education, citizenship and the programmes of personal, social and health education (PSHE) help pupils to understand controversial issues and how people try to resolve conflict in a democratic society. Pupils also have many opportunities across the whole life of the school to learn the principles that distinguish right from wrong.

27. Provision for pupils' cultural development is generally good, and very good in art and RE. In these subjects, pupils extend their horizons by learning about a wide range of different traditions. In other subjects, teachers could do more to prepare pupils better for the cultural richness and ethnic diversity of the contemporary world.

28. The previous inspection identified weaknesses in the area of spiritual development. As a result of the school's vigorous response, improvement has been significant and provision is now good. The school complies with statutory requirements and pupils benefit from an impressive programme of daily assemblies. Pupils now make good progress in the development of spiritual awareness and self-knowledge.

Sixth form

29. The attendance of students in the sixth form last academic year was unsatisfactory in Year 12 (87.8 per cent) and satisfactory (91.8 per cent) in Year 13. Most students, however, attend well, a position fostered by a careful note of attendance at individual lessons and by dovetailing data with the system of providing Educational Maintenance Allowances for appropriate sixth formers. The

system is underpinned by a very thorough handbook on all matters to do with attendance and punctuality. The school's analyses of attendance, however, are not to the same high standard as its documentation.

30. Students' attitudes and behaviour are good. Students work hard in lessons and enhance their personal development. They behave responsibly and show appropriate levels of aspiration. The school provides a programme of RE for sixth formers and the school's general ethos affirms and assists students' aspirations. Opportunities exist for students to give support to younger pupils. The school is rightly proud of its sixth-form students. They are good examples of success for younger pupils.

Ethnic background of pupils

Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No. of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	851	49	8
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	1	0	0
Mixed – White and Black African	1	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	2	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	8	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani	1	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	2	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	1	0	0
Chinese	4	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	9	0	0

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

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

Teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and learning are good throughout the school. They are at their best in the sixth form. The quality of teaching is similar to (though slightly better than) what was reported at the last inspection. Teaching is at least satisfactory in all but a handful of lessons. It is usually good and is very good in one in every five lessons. Most pupils learn well as a result of teaching usually being well planned, interesting and firmly managed. In a small minority of cases, pupils do not learn well enough, because teaching is unchallenging. The assessment of pupils' work and progress is done well in most departments. A very good structure for tracking how well pupils achieve throughout the school is marred in practice by inconsistencies between departments and the initial underestimation of some pupils' potential.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching quality is a strength of the school's work.
- Six outstanding lessons were seen and one in every five lessons is very good.
- Teaching is particularly effective in the sixth form: students generally make good progress.
- There is not enough focus on high-ability pupils.
- Most classes are managed very well: pupils can learn here.
- Teaching is very good throughout art and in sixth-form English and psychology.

Commentary

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 190 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
6 (3%)	38 (20%)	90 (47%)	49 (26%)	7 (4%)	0	0

The table gives the number of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about lessons; the figures in brackets show percentages.

31. The quality of teaching and learning are good in both the main school (Years 7-11) and the sixth form. Teaching is satisfactory or better in nearly all lessons. It has been sustained at the same good level since the last inspection. In 1999, 96 per cent of the teaching was judged to be satisfactory or better. That is still the case. Sixty-eight per cent of teaching was good (or better) at the last inspection, but that proportion has now risen slightly to 70 per cent. The proportion of very good (or better) teaching has risen from 21 to 23 per cent. Six lessons seen were quite outstanding – a high proportion.

32. Teachers have good command of their subjects. In many classes, teachers' enthusiasm for their subject rubs off on pupils, who show a good level of commitment to their studies. In an excellent Year 8 RE lesson on Mohammad, for example, the teacher's very clear grasp of subject matter and learning techniques ensured that pupils listened very attentively, understood how to learn effectively and made considerable strides in acquiring relevant information and learning skills. In a Year 9 mathematics lesson, as a result of the teacher's precise use of specialist terminology, accompanied by alternative explanations, pupils acquired a confident understanding of the lesson topic. Strong subject knowledge is applied particularly well in most lessons in English and art.

33. Most planning is done well. In the best lessons, clear structures, precise explanations and carefully graduated learning steps enable pupils to know with confidence what the aims of lessons are and the time they have to undertake different tasks. In a fair proportion of lessons, work is planned to ensure that pupils of different abilities and speed of learning are very well catered for – as, for example, by open-ended tasks that can be undertaken in varying depth. In a very good Year 8 music lesson, the teacher's meticulous preparation and imaginative direction helped to ensure that all pupils achieved well on their keyboards.

34. In a few lessons, tasks are inadequately planned and thought through. In these, it is not clear what the real heart of the learning is – as distinct from carrying out a sequence of tasks. Similarly, pupils of different abilities are not always well catered for: the result is that quick, high-attaining pupils are sometimes left with time on their hands and do not achieve as much as they could, whilst others struggle to keep up. At other times, pupils are spoon-fed too much information.

35. In most lessons, teachers use a wide variety of means to interest, stimulate and encourage pupils. Appropriate praise and encouraging comments give many pupils the confidence to explore and share their ideas – although a significant minority contribute little to class discussion, rarely venturing beyond unclear, single-word answers. Information and communication technology (and especially interactive electronic whiteboards and computers) make a significant – and often innovative – contribution to many lessons.

36. The greatest contribution to high achievement in learning is the level of intellectual or creative challenge from teachers and their appropriately high expectations. This is because the vast majority of pupils are well behaved in class and ready to learn. In the most successful lessons where pupils achieve well (or very well), teachers ensure that pupils have to think hard, analyse problems, consider alternatives and formulate their own conclusions – all within a clear lesson plan. Much ground is covered in depth. In these cases, teachers always keep in mind precisely what it is that they wish pupils to learn.

37. In an outstanding mathematics lesson in Year 9, for example, the teacher's exemplary skill and very high expectations ensured that all pupils were fully engrossed in their work on triangular numbers. Firm, friendly discipline, spot-on timing and excellent use of ICT were but three of the ingredients that resulted in all pupils thinking deeply about their work and understanding very clearly how to improve it. Their achievement was very high.

38. Where achievement is just passable at best, information and ideas may be packaged well by the teacher, but pupils' understanding and store of knowledge are superficial or fragile. This minority of lessons is typified by simplistic views, thin topic coverage, little worthwhile knowledge being imparted or dull teaching. Discussion is rare or superficial and insufficient attention is paid to standards of presentation, spelling and punctuation.

39. Pupils are managed very well overall. The vast majority of teachers successfully insist on high standards of behaviour. There is a calm, businesslike atmosphere in most classes as a result of the warm, but firm, relationships established by teachers. Teachers know their pupils very well. In most lessons, teachers' strong, encouraging presence ensures that pupils learn soundly. Just occasionally, silly niggling behaviour is inadequately curbed.

40. The usual range of teaching methods is used. The most productive lessons use a judicious blend of direct, teacher explanation, paired or group work and demanding plenary sessions. A minority are highly successful in sustaining extended analysis and discussion amongst pupils. In a significant minority of others, pupils do not practise sufficiently the skills of debate, of developing a point of view, charring, scribing and – in a clear voice – of formally presenting conclusions to the class. A greater concentration on debate and oral presentation is an important next step in the school's development.

41. A very committed, skilled team of learning support staff provides carefully matched assistance to pupils with special educational needs. They equip pupils well with the skills to succeed in class. Support assistants are well deployed, very familiar with pupils' individual education plans and work effectively with them to improve their skills and confidence. Subject teachers know these pupils well. Lesson plans do not, however, take enough account of these pupils' individual learning needs, with the necessary match of work. Intensive literacy and numeracy support is very effective.

42. The school's teaching is highly rated by parents. The pre-inspection pupil questionnaire, completed by most pupils, also gives a very favourable view of most aspects of teaching. Nearly all pupils, for example, felt that teachers expected them to work hard and do their best. They regard teachers' assessment of their work as helpful. Nearly one third, however, had doubts about the quality and usefulness of homework – a situation not helped by the absence of a centralised homework timetable to guide all pupils, their parents and teachers.

43. Teaching is good in most subjects and year groups. It is very good in art. It is satisfactory in science in Years 7-9, in mathematics, PE and RE in Years 10-11 and in citizenship and modern foreign languages throughout Years 7-11. In no subject is it unsatisfactory overall.

44. The assessment of pupils' work is good in almost all subjects. It is very good in art: pupils clearly improve their achievement, because they are heavily involved in assessing their own learning. Assessment is unsatisfactory in geography up to Year 9, because progress is not tracked well enough. Whilst assessment in citizenship is satisfactory overall, it is not carried out in a uniform way. Assessment is satisfactory in science (and improving rapidly), modern foreign languages and PE.

45. Teachers usually pitch work at reasonably challenging levels, although this is not always the case for high-ability pupils. Pupils with special educational needs are very carefully assessed and information from primary schools is collected to help ensure continuity. Most pupils have a good feel for how they are progressing, particularly where teachers and pupils assess work together.

Day-to-day marking is satisfactory overall, but often lacks clear pointers as to how pupils can improve.

46. The school makes substantial use in both Year 7 and Year 10 of nationally established systems for assessing pupils' potential. These are used alongside past and continuing performance to predict and update, on a yearly basis, the GCSE grades in each subject that pupils are likely to attain. This is a very good structure and both teachers and pupils understand the system well. There is, however, too little management emphasis placed on evaluating precisely the messages from past performance and some underestimation of pupils' potential.

Sixth form

47. Forty-eight sixth-form lessons were inspected. The quality of teaching is good overall. It was at least satisfactory in all the lessons inspected. It was good or better in 85 per cent of lessons: just over half were good and one quarter very good. Three lessons in mathematics, art, and design and technology were outstanding.

48. Teaching is very good in English, art and psychology and good overall in other subjects. Most aspects of sixth-form teaching are strong. An adult learning atmosphere pervades most classes. Another notable approach to learning across most subjects is the emphasis on producing evidence and justifying points of view: both teachers and students are prepared to be interrogated about the basis and validity of their judgements. As a result of the thorough, knowledgeable, searching and encouraging teaching that sixth formers generally experience, most make good progress in their studies.

49. The assessment of students' work is done accurately. Assessment is very good in English, art and psychology, helping students particularly well towards further improvement. Day-to-day marking is not as helpful as it could be to students in biology and chemistry. Consistently good teaching (including a strong awareness of individual students' capabilities) challenges students effectively to achieve their potential. The school uses a national benchmarking system to predict end-of-course grades effectively. The good systems in place help most students to achieve well.

50. Sixth formers rate the teaching they receive highly. Virtually all believe they receive teaching from subject experts who provide suitably challenging tasks. Most value the way in which their work is assessed and the careful guidance they receive on it. The school's emphasis on "autonomous learning" is well reflected in the sixth formers' view that they are encouraged to study and research independently. Although a significant minority of students are dissatisfied with the type of homework they are set, three-quarters of students indicate their satisfaction with it. All respondents said that they enjoy being a sixth former in this school – a powerful endorsement.

The curriculum

The curriculum is good overall. It is broad and balanced, and meets all statutory requirements, including those for RE and a daily act of collective worship. There is a good range of extracurricular opportunities that provide enrichment for pupils. The quality of accommodation and resources to meet the needs of the curriculum are satisfactory overall.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The work-related curriculum, including work experience, is particularly well planned.
- Very good guidance enables pupils to move successfully from one stage of education to the next.
- The needs of pupils with special educational needs are well met.
- Too much teaching time is often lost by the long distance that pupils travel between lessons.
- Sound opportunities for enrichment are not presented clearly enough to sixth formers.

Commentary

51. The school's "technology college" status has a very positive effect on the curriculum, particularly for pupils in Years 10 and 11. It has enabled the school to enhance technology subjects and, through *Excellence in Cities*, to offer its facilities both to other students in its small consortium of sixth forms and to adult learners.

52. The curriculum is carefully planned and offers a broad range of opportunities. All subjects of the national curriculum are taught, as well as RE, drama and PSHE. Suitable, ongoing guidance is provided to help pupils to make the right choice of subjects. There is a satisfactory programme in place to teach pupils about sex and relationships and about drug misuse. The majority of pupils aged 11-14 study two modern foreign languages. Literacy and numeracy are well taught, although opportunities to use them are fewer than usual in science. In Years 8 and 9, a careers education programme is being piloted for evaluation.

53. There is a good range of curricular choice for pupils moving into Year 10. For pupils in Years 10 and 11, the choice includes Young Apprenticeships and a work-related learning programme (WRL) that includes joinery and beauty care. Year 10 pupils benefit from very well planned work experience. *Connexions* staff make a very positive contribution to the curriculum: for example, they work closely with school staff to modify programmes to suit pupils with special educational needs. An "employability mentor", funded by the charitable organisation *Own It*, effectively supports a small group of vulnerable pupils.

54. Some subjects have "blocked" timetables in Years 10 and 11. This works well in some subjects (such as music), but in others it is less effective – as, for instance, in mathematics and modern foreign languages (as noted at the last inspection). Pupils tend to concentrate less as these long classes progress and there are quite often long time-gaps from one lesson to the next.

55. The overall provision for pupils with special educational needs is good. The Learning Support team provides very effective, short, intensive sessions in the Learning Support base. Pupils with special educational needs are supported well in class, but, occasionally, seating and room organisation do not enable support staff to help pupils as well as they could. Individual Education Plans (IEPs) include suitable individual targets for improvement, but their format is inconsistent, making them difficult to use and monitor. Lesson plans often do not set out how work is to be matched to individuals' needs, although pupils with special educational needs usually cope well with the work given to the class they are in. There is a good programme of activities to motivate and stretch gifted and talented pupils, although insufficient A* grades are obtained at GCSE.

56. A very good menu of extracurricular provision includes sports and arts-based activities. Extension lessons after the school day – as, for example, in mathematics and ICT – and visits to the theatre or local places of interest provide good, additional opportunities to learn. Pupils' involvement in fund-raising for charity and other activities develops their sense of responsibility well.

57. Accommodation is satisfactory overall, but very variable. There is a stark contrast between the newly built *City Learning Centre*, with its first-rate facilities, and sections of the older part of the school which are well worn and (in some areas) in need of attention for reasons of health and safety: there is much dust, for example, in such teaching areas as science, art, and design and technology. Some outdoor surfaces are poor and many carpets need replacement. The accommodation is very spread out across the large site, with the result that pupils often travel long distances between lessons, so losing valuable teaching time. There is no medical room. The Learning Support Centre, in contrast, is comfortable and spacious, providing very good accommodation for learning.

58. Resources for learning are good overall and have been substantially enhanced by the City Learning Centre. There are sufficient books and equipment within subject departments and a well-resourced library. Overall, there has been good curricular improvement since the last inspection.

Sixth form

59. A partnership arrangement with two other schools ensures that students have access to a satisfactory range of subjects, thereby increasing opportunities. This arrangement generally operates effectively, although the 'blocking' of subjects leads to students quite often having all their teaching time concentrated in two sessions. Students access a good range of courses offered by Community Education in the *City Learning Centre*.

60. The work-related element of the curriculum is thin and work experience is not well planned. Many students have part-time jobs, a factor that sometimes impacts on coursework. Opportunities to develop partnerships with their main employers have not been explored, so that this work experience can be validated. Some subjects such as business education and economics do not have close links with work experience.

61. Students visit higher education institutions and benefit from a range of activities that raise their aspirations and prepare them for the next stage of their education. *Connexions* provides suitable advice and support for students in making choices and preparing personal statements. There is a wide range of extracurricular activities and other opportunities for enrichment – including theatre visits, a visit to New York, peer reading and mentoring, Young Enterprise, Community Sports Leaders Award and fund-raising for charity. Information about these opportunities is, however, not made clearly and comprehensively available to students as a coherent menu of activities. Sixth-form accommodation is satisfactory. There is sufficient private-study space.

Care, guidance and support

The school's provision for pupils' care and welfare is very good. In contrast, procedures to ensure pupils' health and safety are no better than satisfactory. Support, advice and guidance for pupils in the main school are good, and satisfactory for students in the sixth form. The school is good at seeking, valuing and acting on pupils' views. Arrangements for the induction of pupils into Year 7 are very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Arrangements for induction into Year 7 are very successful.
- The school now has generally good toilet facilities for pupils.
- Pupils in Years 9-11 receive very good guidance on careers and further study.
- Parts of the buildings and grounds look neglected.
- The maintenance of safety in the area of the science laboratories has weaknesses.

Commentary

62. Pupils receive care and guidance principally through the tutorial system, building up a good, trusting relationship with their tutor. This good level of planned care contributes much to the confidence that pupils feel in the pastoral system and to the positive relationships and sense of purpose and harmony that are noticeable features of the school.

63. The previous inspection report made improvement of the condition of the toilets a key issue for action. The school has had the toilets refurbished and the facilities are now good. Increased supervision and better cleaning have not only raised standards of hygiene, but also improved the school's general care and welfare for pupils.

64. Since the last inspection, the school has considerably strengthened its provision for assemblies both in the two central halls and the form rooms. The school now complies with the requirement that pupils should have a daily opportunity for an act of collective worship.

65. Procedures for child protection and those for ensuring pupils' safety when they are on organised visits away from school are detailed and meet prudent requirements. Most other aspects

of health and safety are satisfactory. The school has recently made improvements: the installation of the fence at the front of the school building, for example, has not only increased security, but also reduced vandalism by intruders.

66. Despite such improvements, both buildings and grounds as a whole have a neglected appearance, with the maintenance and attractiveness of this very large site in need of more attention. The school has no medical room for sick pupils. The lack of detail about procedures for implementation of the school's health and safety policy, noted in the previous report, continues. Floor coverings, for example, are in poor condition in some places and, in the area of the science laboratories, some monitoring and maintenance of safety falls below a satisfactory level.

67. Parents and pupils particularly like the very good arrangements for induction into Year 7. The school's many links with primary schools help to effect a smooth transition for pupils. Teachers from different subjects teach pupils in Year 6 and so, knowing what these pupils can do, ensure good continuity of learning and achievement from primary education.

68. Tutors monitor pupils' academic progress and personal development systematically. This monitoring, with its use of benchmarks and targets, helps to identify pupils who are doing better or worse than expected. The system is a very good one, although it requires greater accuracy of interpretation. The school's three learning mentors help pupils in danger of falling behind. Guidance on careers and further study is very good, with substantial support from *Connexions*

69. The school involves pupils in its work and development through year councils, consisting of elected representatives from each form. This type of representation helps pupils to know how democracy works and contributes to their understanding of citizenship. The school, however, lacks a whole-school council, with its own officers and minutes, as a fully representative body with a still clearer voice for pupils and students.

Sixth form

70. In most aspects, students in the sixth form receive an appropriate level of care, guidance and support. This is reflected in the pleasant maturity students generally display and their solid academic achievement. The school conducts its own surveys to discover where students perceive there are opportunities for further improvement; around three-quarters of students feel that the school seeks and responds to their views. The inspection confirms the finding that students want the school to make better use of tutorial time. A significant minority of students say they would also like better advice and guidance on what to do after leaving school.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school is held in high regard by parents. Both pupils and sixth-form students feel that it is a good school to attend. Parents are pleased with the progress their children make and feel they are kept well informed. There are good links with the community and the close working relationships with contributory primary schools is a major strength.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The transfer and induction of pupils from primary to secondary education are well handled.
- There is a range of very good, effective links with contributory primary schools.
- The school has good, constructive links with the community.
- The setting and timetabling of homework remain unclear.

Commentary

71. The school's links with parents are good. Parents and pupils value the school and (rightly) consider that its teaching is good. Parents feel the school is well led and managed and in particular embrace the school's high expectations of their children to work hard and do their best. Good quality

information is available to parents through the prospectus, the school's website, monthly newsletters and the *Benton Bugle*. Parents find the school approachable and welcoming. A comprehensive policy statement in the *Staff Handbook* makes it clear to teachers that the school values its partnership with parents.

72. Parents are kept well informed about their children's progress in a variety of ways – as, for example, by consultation evenings (always well attended), by written, annual reports and more recently by the assessment and target-setting system operating throughout the school. The *Student Planner* provides a means of ready communication between home and school. During the time of the inspection, form tutors ensured that planners were used. The September newsletter to parents also underlined their importance. In the reports to parents and during the biannual, guidance fortnights, clear, subject-specific advice is given to pupils on how to improve their work.

73. The school's website is seen as a growing way of providing curricular and coursework information through specialist software that is being increasingly used. There is, in contrast, little curricular information provided for parents that would help them to support their children's learning. The lack of a centralised homework timetable limits information and forward-planning for parents and pupils and consistency for staff.

74. The school has, from time to time, formally consulted parents on specific issues. This was done most recently on the timing of the school day, with a follow-up review set a year later. Links with parents are further enhanced through the activities of the Parent-Teacher Association (PTA). The PTA organises both social and educational meetings and activities as well as contributing valuable funds to the school for the benefit of pupils.

75. The school recognises the importance of its role in the local community and the benefits that this brings. It also draws upon other amenities that are accessible in the wider, regional locality. The school has developed productive, vocational links with a range of local businesses for their work experience programme and training schemes. The Learning Support team works closely with external partners, including *Connexions*, to provide effective support for pupils with special educational needs.

76. Visits are also arranged to art galleries, theatres and museums. The school's performing arts groups produce performances and concerts that are well attended by members of the community as well as parents. As a community college, a substantial range of adult education courses takes place on the school's site during both the day and evening. The school's sports facilities, too, are widely used by groups and clubs from the locality.

77. A strength of the school is its close links with contributory primary schools. Staff from the school regularly visit all the relevant primary schools to talk to teachers as well as pupils in Year 6. They coordinate and use a range of "transition units" to help pupils transfer smoothly and confidently from primary to secondary education. Careful consideration is given to personal factors in the construction of tutorial and teaching groups. Parents and pupils are invited to come and visit the school during the summer term prior to transition. The range of documentation provided to new pupils and parents is extensive and very informative.

Sixth form

78. The school is a partner in a cluster of three schools providing post-16 courses. This system provides a wider choice of subjects to students than would otherwise be the case. This successful initiative now involves a growing number of students travelling between the three schools.

79. All the students who returned the pre-inspection questionnaire said they enjoyed being in the school's sixth form. They also agreed that they were treated fairly and with respect. Whilst the large majority of students considered teaching to be good, staff helpful and accessible, and their work well assessed, a significant number were less positive about the extracurricular and enrichment activities available. There were also significant doubts about advice on careers and further education

opportunities as well as aspects of pastoral support. Inspectors conclude that guidance is generally good, but that a good range of enrichment activities is not coherently presented to students.

80. The school conducted its own survey of Year 13 students about "Life in the Sixth Form". This confirms that students generally enjoy the experience, but identified some reservations about the sixth-form collaboration within the cluster of schools. Students felt there was a lack of communication between the schools regarding administrative details and student data. During the inspection, similar gaps in the exchange of relevant information were also identified.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The leadership of the principal is very good. That of other key staff ranges from very good to satisfactory, and is good overall. Management is good and effective in most tasks. Staff are very good role models. The governing body is very supportive of the school and satisfactory in the overall performance of its duties.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The principal provides the school with very good leadership.
- The school is highly committed to all its students. It is very inclusive.
- The sixth form, though good, is not cost-effective.

Commentary

81. The principal provides very good leadership for the school. As a result of careful deliberation and detailed knowledge of the community it serves, he has formed a very clear, appropriate vision and sense of purpose for its work, underpinned by high aspirations. He is well supported by a hard-working leadership team and other key members of staff. Their combined efforts have secured a calm and purposeful ethos throughout the school and a good standard of teaching and learning. This support has not extended to a fully critical analysis of the school's academic performance. The principal's aims are shared by all members of the school's staff and are reflected in the good quality of the school's planning processes and high morale. This is a major reason why the school is effective in promoting the all-round development of its pupils.

82. Throughout the school, leadership is good. Effective teams have been established. Teaching and the curriculum are well led. Leaders provide very good role models to other staff and to pupils, contributing to its strong sense of purpose and community and often establishing challenging expectations. There is a very clear commitment to valuing members of the community served by the school. This is reflected, for example, in the range of adult education classes run by the school and its provision for adults with learning difficulties. The new special educational needs coordinator has a clear vision for the future.

83. The governance of the school, including the sixth form, is satisfactory. Governors are highly committed to the school and take pleasure in its achievements. They ensure that they know the school and its staff. Whilst they offer the principal and the school invaluable support, they are less effective in ensuring that they provide appropriate guidance and challenge, because they frequently lack the necessary quality of information, relying overmuch on internal information provided by the school's management. Consequently, whilst governors have a satisfactory understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses, these views are not as objective as they could be. Governors ensure that the school meets its statutory requirements.

84. Management of the school is good overall at all levels. The school is thoughtful and evaluates its performance, but not comprehensively. This explains, for example, why the most able pupils do not achieve as much as they should. The school now requires a comprehensive, coherent and manageable body of data that clearly identifies the trends in how well it is doing in all aspects of its work.

85. The performance management of all staff (and not just teachers) is making a good contribution to bringing about further improvement and is well linked to the school's development plan. Careful thought has been given to ensure that all staff benefit in the most appropriate manner from training. The effectiveness of training is evaluated on an individual and whole-school basis. The introduction of professional portfolios for all teachers helps to identify training needs. The school has been praised by a partner university for the good contribution it makes to the initial training of teachers.

86. Good measures have been taken to ensure the effective recruitment and retention of staff. As a result, the school has not experienced difficulties in maintaining an appropriate workforce. Imagination has been shown in the way the school has responded to national initiatives. A recent example of this is the employment of "cover supervisors" to relieve teachers of the need to oversee classes of absent colleagues. The consequence is that teachers know they will not have a reduction in the time available for planning or marking.

87. In recent years, the school's budget has been in deficit. This arose from poor quality information about projected student numbers. However, the school has worked effectively to reduce this deficit and has well-founded plans which indicate that it will have achieved a return to financial health by the end of the current financial year. This swift reduction has been brought about by reviewing objectively all possibilities of effecting savings, including the regrading of posts when vacancies arise. Governors and the leadership team have ensured that the quality of education has not been reduced.

88. Savings have also been brought about through taking the cleaning contract "in house" after a careful testing of the market. This is one example of how good compliance with the principles of "best value" is benefiting the school. The school does consult with the community it serves – as, for example, through pupil councils and, for parents, through the PTA. Governors do not, however, use data now available from other schools nationally as a tool to evaluate their own patterns of expenditure.

89. The school's finances are efficiently managed and the monitoring of expenditure is effective. The inclusion of the finance manager in the leadership team is one way by which the school's expenditure is well linked to its processes of development. There are more teachers in the school than usually found in a school of this size and the school spends more money per pupil than the national average. However, because of the accounting procedures required of the school, it is not easy for management to make ready analysis of the income and expenditure that relate only to pupils between the ages of 11 and 18 (as opposed, for example, to adult classes). The school provides satisfactory value for money.

Sixth form

90. The leadership of the sixth form is good and its management satisfactory. A good achievement is that students normally make sound progress in Years 12 and 13. Whilst the school recognises the advantages of monitoring the quality of teaching in the sixth form, this has not yet been undertaken and so essential first-hand information that would assist the school to ensure quality is not available to it. The commitment to ensure the needs of all individuals are met is good in the sixth form, but not as strong as for pupils aged 11-16. For example, insufficient thought has been given to the implications of students in very large or very small teaching groups.

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91. Collaboration with two other institutions to deliver sixth-form courses has increased the efficiency of the sixth form since the time of the previous inspection. Video-conferencing has been introduced to share teaching with other institutions. However, the school still spends considerably more than it receives in respect of sixth-form students. This is because there are many small and very small teaching groups in the sixth form. As a result, money intended for pupils aged 11-16 is spent on students in Years 12 and 13. The sixth form is far from being cost-effective and therefore, despite students' solid achievements, provides unsatisfactory value for money.

Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	3,835,400	Balance from previous year	-308,715
Total expenditure	3,687,469	Balance carried forward to the next year	-160,784
Expenditure per pupil	4,218		

The above table includes income and expenditure in respect of adult education which, because of accounting procedures the school has to follow, cannot easily be separated from that for its pupils and students between the ages of 11 and 18.

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 AND 4

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

English

Provision in English is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is a very clear vision and direction for the subject.
- Pupils make good progress and achieve well. The 2004 GCSE results were strong.
- Teachers are enthusiastic subject specialists and insist on good standards.
- There is insufficient use of ICT in lessons.

Commentary

92. The Year 9 national test results were average in 2003 and at a broadly similar level (after substantial remarking) in 2004. These results represent a satisfactory achievement for most pupils. In 2003, the GCSE results were above the national norm. They showed a good achievement from primary school and from the results at the end of Year 9. They were even better in 2004, when 75 per cent of pupils (including four out of every five girls) gained at least a grade C.

93. The standard of pupils' work in Year 9 reflects broadly average standards and represents satisfactory progress since pupils entered the school in Year 7. Accuracy, expression and fluency when pupils read aloud are satisfactory. Pupils are well used to finding evidence in the texts they read to support a point of view. They regularly draft and redraft their written work to improve its quality, using an appropriate range of sentence structures and technical vocabulary. The quality of their written work is good overall. Lower-attaining pupils, who have additional literacy lessons, make good progress in developing their understanding and use of key skills. Pupils are usually keen to learn and this attitude contributes to the very positive learning atmosphere in classrooms.

94. By the end of Year 11, the overall standard of pupils' work is above average. Pupils make good progress from the end of Year 9. The written work of higher-attaining pupils is carefully planned and drafted. Meaning is cogently expressed through the use of a wide vocabulary and well-constructed and varied sentences and paragraphs. Pupils in a lower set in Year 10, too, made good progress as they used their existing knowledge of advertisements to identify the key features in them.

95. Teaching ranges from very good to satisfactory and is good overall. All lessons focus clearly on what pupils will do. In a very good Year 8 lesson, reviewing the language of advertisements, it was the use made by the teacher of "stepping stones" in pupils' learning that ensured substantial progress. Very effective discussion in pairs, followed by well-managed, whole-class sharing of ideas, helped all pupils not only to understand such key features as "bullet points" and "font", but also to go further and explain in detail their importance in advertisements.

96. The leadership and management of the department are good and effective. The subject leader leads by example and has created a very strong, specialist department in which there is an impressive sense of collaboration. Assessment is used well to monitor pupils' progress and to help them to identify key targets for improvement. Very strong links exist between English and drama. Extracurricular opportunities for pupils are good. Progress since the last inspection has been good.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

97. The school has a good policy for cross-curricular literacy. It has implemented a wide range of initiatives to improve pupils' literacy, including a "literacy calendar" and "Harry Potter spelling charts". However, despite the very strong coordination of literacy activities across the curriculum, there is insufficient monitoring of practice in all subjects to ensure a continued improvement in the quality of literacy.

98. The standard of literacy is average overall. Pupils' writing is generally of an average standard. It is above average in art and in design and technology, but a little below average in science. The standard of reading is good in art, design and technology, and history. Speaking and listening are above average in mathematics. The clarity of speech and the frequency and extent of discussion are slightly below average overall and require more planned attention across the school.

Modern foreign languages

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The department is well led.
- Teaching styles are inconsistent across the department.
- Teachers' marking is not clear or helpful enough.
- The department contributes well to pupils' cultural development.

Commentary

99. The proportion of pupils attaining grades A*-C in French and German in the full-course GCSE examinations in 2003 was significantly below average. Most pupils, however, attained grades in the range A*-G. These results showed a decline from those of 2002. A major reason is that a high turnover of teachers resulted in a loss of continuity for pupils that impaired their attainment and motivation. Girls outperformed boys and the difference between the sexes was greater than is usual nationally. Pupils tend to do less well in French and German than in most of their other subjects.

100. The GCSE results for 2004 showed a slight improvement in French and a marked rise in German at grades A*-C. No boys, however, attained a higher grade (A* or A) in French or German in 2004. Standards, as measured by teachers' assessments, rose appreciably by the end of Year 9 in 2004.

101. All pupils learn French in Year 7 and a significant majority commence German as well in Year 8. Pupils' overall level of attainment in French by the end of Year 9 is average. Their achievement is satisfactory. Pupils with special educational needs achieve similarly to other pupils. A small class of pupils in Year 9 is making good progress on limited teaching time.

102. By the end of Year 9, pupils are familiar with the perfect tense in French (which higher-attaining pupils use confidently in their written work) and with modal verbs in German. Some written work is marred by careless mistakes in copying and by untidy presentation. Over time, pupils acquire a wide range of vocabulary, which enables them to complete reading and listening tasks successfully. Pronunciation is generally sound, but many pupils are dependent on prompts for speaking.

103. Only two classes study a foreign language in Year 11. In each class, attainment ranges from well above average to well below average. The overall standard of attainment in French and German by the end of Year 11 is close to average. Most pupils' achievement is satisfactory. Pupils complete listening and reading exercises appropriately. Higher-attaining pupils' written work in each language displays a good range of vocabulary and constructions. Other pupils are less accurate.

The standard of the pupils who have opted to study modern foreign languages in Year 10 shows much promise.

104. Teaching and learning in Years 7-11 in French and German are satisfactory overall and contain some good features. All teachers teach both languages and have solid subject knowledge, but the foreign language is not always used consistently to challenge pupils. Teachers work hard and promote good classroom relationships. Lessons are well planned to include different activities and skills that enable pupils to work productively, either independently or with others. Resources (particularly the mini-whiteboards) are used well. Classroom management is good. Some lessons do not, however, end with sufficient evaluation of what pupils have memorised. The marking of pupils' written work is inconsistent and not always helpful.

105. The department is well led, but satisfactory management is made more difficult partly by the fragmented nature of the accommodation. Teachers contribute well to pupils' cultural development, but the department has no foreign language assistants. Improvement since the previous inspection has been broadly satisfactory. Time is still, however, lost at the beginning of some lessons by inter-lesson movement and long, double lessons in Years 10 and 11 still tax the concentration of pupils. Both issues require early resolution.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Achievement is now good by the end of Year 9.
- GCSE results in 2004 showed a significant improvement over previous years.
- Pupils are not actively involved early enough in a significant proportion of lessons.
- Innovative teaching with ICT encourages pupils to enjoy the subject.
- Leadership is good and openly enthusiastic.
- A significant number of pupils learn less well because of over-long lessons.

Commentary

106. The Year 9 national test results were in line with the national average in 2003, as they have been for several years. The results in 2003 showed unsatisfactory achievement from results in primary schools. Results in 2004 were higher than in 2003, although these pupils still entered the school with above average results in mathematics from their primary schools. Achievement is improving in Years 7-9 and is now good. In 2003, GCSE results were in line with the national average. No pupil obtained the top grade, but the overall achievement was satisfactory. The 2004 results showed a significant improvement, with three pupils obtaining the highest, A* grade. Sixty-three per cent of pupils gained a grade in the range A*-C. There is no marked difference of attainment between boys and girls at the end of either Year 9 or Year 11.

107. Standards in the early stages of the current Year 9 are above average. This represents good achievement for all ability levels. In particular, the most able pupils are challenged to exceptionally high levels and respond well in work on algebra, including triangular numbers.

Example of outstanding practice

108. In an excellent lesson in Year 9, the most able pupils were challenged from the moment they entered the room until they left. The work was on triangular numbers. Not a moment was wasted. Pupils swapped homeworks to assess how well they had learned and how they could do better. The teacher, using precise questions, continuous encouragement and an interactive whiteboard to help visualise patterns, led all the class to appropriate formulae. Review preceded every step forward. This brought out the best in pupils. All were involved intently. They decided confidently how their answers should be structured. Such technical language as “linear” and “quadratic” was freely and accurately used. Even the mathematician Gauss was introduced. An appropriate, open-ended question was set for homework: “find the easiest way to add up the first 100 numbers.” A splendid lesson – very high expectations, firm but friendly relationships, timing spot on, excellent differentiation and innovative use of resources. Pupils had to think deeply – and with enjoyment – about their work and how to improve it. They learned an awful lot in 50 minutes.

109. Standards in Year 11 are broadly in line with those expected nationally. This is satisfactory achievement overall from Year 9, but in a significant number of cases (and particularly amongst able boys) there is underachievement from their standards on entry to the school. Pupils with special educational needs achieve satisfactorily.

110. Teaching is good in Years 7-9, satisfactory in Years 10-11 and good overall. It is usually more lively and imaginative with younger pupils. Teachers make very good use of interactive whiteboards to display diagrams and refer back suitably to previous work. Pupils enjoy this practice and usually learn well. There is, however, a tendency for teachers to talk for too long, particularly at the start of lessons. In a minority of lessons where pupils were required to listen and watch for too long at the start, they became restless and both learning and behaviour were unsatisfactory.

111. All teachers work hard for their pupils. They respect them and aim to make the subject exciting and enjoyable. In some double lessons of one hour 40 minutes, pupils (mainly boys) tire well before the end. In other lessons, pupils start slowly because of too long a time gap from the previous lesson. The present timetabling arrangements restrict pupils' learning and the school has not done enough since the last inspection to improve this weakness.

112. Assessment is good. Pupils know how well they are doing. They often assess their own work to decide how to improve. This works exceptionally well on occasions, but the time is sometimes wasted when class management is insecure and homework not treated seriously.

113. Leadership is good. The head of department has been in post for only a very short time. He leads by example in his own first-rate teaching and has a strong presence around the subject area. He has thoughtfully identified improvements needed (such as timetabling), but not had time to effect the necessary changes. Improvement since the previous inspection has been satisfactory, except in timetabling lessons. Achievement is now better than it was and GCSE results are higher.

Mathematics across the curriculum

114. Pupils work at a standard above the national norm in Years 7-9 and in line with the norm in Years 10-11. This is sufficient to allow pupils to progress as expected in other subjects. For example, they draw graphs well in geography and history. In geography, they interpret graphs effectively and make good use of numeracy. They develop their algebraic skills in ICT. Numeric, statistical, graphical and spatial skills are developed in art and in design and technology, but not strongly so. In modern foreign languages, numeracy skills are sufficient to use for linguistic work on calendars and clocks. There is no evidence of mathematics playing any significant part in English, PE or RE. The school has a policy for mathematics across the curriculum, but there is no tracking of the quality or extent of its use.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Achievement in Years 7-9 has been barely satisfactory, but is beginning to improve.
- GCSE results are too low; top grades are under-represented.
- Pupils make limited use of ICT.
- The scheme of work and teaching methods need further attention in Years 7-9.
- Laboratories and utilities are outmoded, giving the subject a dowdy image.

Commentary

115. Pupils' overall attainment on entry to the school in Year 7 in 2000 and 2001 was a little above the national average. By the end of Year 9, three years later, their overall attainment in the national tests was broadly in line with the national average. Pupils' average points score over Years 7-9 indicates that pupils' overall progress was insufficient and their achievement therefore unsatisfactory. By the end of Year 9, attainment in national tests in science is a little lower than it is in English and mathematics.

116. In 2003, GCSE results were below the national average. The results in 2004 were at a similar overall level. Top grades are under-represented: in 2004, for example, just one A* grade was obtained (in biology). The results in 2004 were much lower than those in English and mathematics and pupils tend to do worse in science than in most of their other subjects. Overall examination achievement is unsatisfactory. Current achievement in lessons is satisfactory.

117. In the present Year 9, standards are improving and are now broadly in line with the national picture. A feature of the department is the large amount of practical work that is offered to pupils. They enjoy this hands-on approach and readily acquire new practical skills. Active teaching methods and learning activities are not, however, used widely enough, so lowering overall attainment and achievement. Pupils have few opportunities to share what they know or engage in extended debate and discussions.

118. Some teachers have adopted strands of the national science teaching strategy for classes in Years 7-9. In only a minority of lessons, however, is there an emphasis on the correct use and spelling of scientific and technical words. Most teachers include this intention in their planning, but few refer to them during lessons. Few key scientific words are displayed in laboratories. Exercise books reveal little evidence of extended writing. The quality of marking pupils' exercise books varies widely: some is very constructive, whilst that by some teachers is superficial and lacks grades. Graph work often lacks precision when, for example, axes go unlabelled. Lower school science provision has been partially reviewed and improvement work is in hand.

119. By the end of Year 11, the overall standard remains below average. For pupils in mid-range sets in Years 10-11, lessons cover the syllabus, but there is insufficient consolidation of pupils' knowledge and understanding through challenging questioning: question-and-answer sessions tend to stick to the purely factual level. Pupils with special educational needs generally make unsatisfactory progress, largely because they receive little additional in-class support. Several students in Year 11 have poor writing skills and barely legible handwriting.

120. Teaching varies from very good to unsatisfactory. It is satisfactory overall in Years 7-9 and good in Years 10-11. Its overall quality needs to be consistently higher, although pupils taking the separate sciences are pleased with the enthusiastic teaching they receive and enjoy their studies, many saying that they will choose sciences in the sixth form. Pupils in lower sets are less attentive, but respond to well-structured lessons that are appropriately paced with short steps. In a very good Year 11 lesson, clear, patient and stimulating teaching sustained pupils' concentration and effort.

As a result of the very good scientific climate created, pupils made sound progress. In another Year 11 lesson, however, pupils did not do as well as they might have done because, despite good classroom relationships, teaching did not take pupils beyond a superficial level of knowledge and understanding.

121. Curricular links with primary schools are good, whereas links with industry and higher educational institutions are limited. Teachers use ICT resources (such as portable computers and projectors) well. No lessons and few pupils' books were seen, however, where pupils used computers. An overgrown quadrangle is often well used as an ecology area.

122. A new subject leader has only very recently taken up duty. He leads a team of committed teachers, all of whom display a love of their subject. The leadership and management of the department are good and promise much for the future. The department has clearly identified priorities to build on its strengths and address known weaknesses. A comprehensive package of assessment procedures is being actively and enthusiastically developed, in order to track pupils' attainment and achievement accurately. Additional, after-school lessons are offered to pupils taking three separate sciences.

123. A team of technicians offers an efficient, much appreciated service. Tired and outmoded facilities give the department a dowdy image. Fume cupboards and corridor fire-doors require attention to ensure that they comply with regulations. Since the last inspection, there has been a fall in the GCSE results. The department recognises that it has not kept pace with improvements in the other two core subjects. Improvement since the last inspection has therefore been unsatisfactory, but staff show a clear determination to remedy deficiencies in the subject.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve well, because they are well taught.
- The subject is well led and well managed.
- Higher-attaining students are not consistently challenged to explore the subject in depth.
- Resources are well used to help pupils to learn.
- Technicians are skilful, but there are not enough of them now that the school has more computers.

Commentary

124. Pupils enter the school with an overall standard that is below average. The standard of work seen from pupils in Year 9 was average. This represents a good achievement. Girls' standards are higher than boys' by the end of Year 9. The highest-attaining students in Year 9 sit a vocational GCSE examination at the end of that year and attain standards equal to the best 16-year-olds.

125. Pupils of average attainment present data well and use simple formulæ in spreadsheets, but do not evaluate their work in depth. Lower-attaining pupils combine text and graphics in documents, but do not yet consider the intended audience of their work. They have difficulty using spreadsheets, because they do not readily recall topics learned in mathematics. The quality of these pupils' work is reduced, because they cannot describe it in detail.

126. Work seen from pupils in Year 11 was above average, showing that pupils continue to achieve well in Years 10 and 11. These standards are considerably higher than the GNVQ results for 2003 and similar to those from 2004. By age 16, there is no difference in the standards achieved by girls and boys.

127. The highest-attaining pupils in Year 11 analyse their work in detail, giving good explanations of detailed tests. They do not always give full evaluations, such as suggesting further improvements. Pupils of average attainment use ICT to present their work effectively. They search databases, but do not check for accuracy. Lower-attaining pupils know the functions of computer peripherals and use spreadsheets to produce graphs, but give limited descriptions of their work. At all ages, pupils with special educational needs achieve well, because they are taught in smaller groups and work is suitably adapted to their needs.

128. Pupils achieve well because they are well taught. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen during the inspection. The best teaching strongly encourages pupils to take responsibility for their own learning. Relationships in classrooms are good, so pupils respond well. Pupils in Year 11, producing Internet pages, realised that their learning was more effective when they explored the features of a new program themselves rather than wait to be told by their teacher. Pupils frequently consider the impact of technology on their lives and enjoy such moral issues as the copyright aspect of downloading music. Pupils make good use of on-line materials to help them to learn.

129. In a small minority of lessons, learning is less effective because time is not well used or is spent on low-level tasks. Higher-attaining pupils are not always fully challenged and so do not explore the subject in the depth of which they are capable. In one lesson, one such pupil, on completing a task, was given more of the same task to do, although being ready to move on to the next stage of learning. Pupils are given informative comment when work is marked, so they know how to make further improvements. Reports provide parents with detailed information on their child's progress.

130. Both leadership and management are good. An effective team approach has been established and GCSE entry for higher-attaining pupils in Year 9 is an appropriate and demanding innovation. The subject leader monitors performance in the subject and has a clear plan of how to bring about yet further improvements. Since the previous inspection, there has been good improvement, because pupils achieve more as a result of better courses, teaching and assessment.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

131. The school has considerably more computers than normally found in schools of a similar size. Over three-quarters of these computers are up to date and the school has definite plans to replace the rest. A highly capable team of technicians services the school's computer network. Very recently, the school made a large addition to its computer network. Until that point, these technicians had been able to ensure that the school's needs were well met. However, there is now an insufficient number of technicians and so a backlog of work sometimes builds up. For example, lengthy delays may occur before new software is installed on the network.

132. In all subjects, pupils have more than adequate ICT skills when using computers in their work. A very good contribution to learning is made by ICT in business studies and a good contribution in mathematics, history and music. Good use is made of the Internet. In one example, pupils watched a video-clip of a preview of a football match in French: this aided their learning, because they were interested in the topic.

133. The school maintains an overview of how computers are used in all subjects and so learning is enhanced, because ICT is used at appropriate points of courses. Teachers have good levels of ICT skill. Good use is made of the *City Learning Centre* located at the school. For example, the school frequently makes use of the extensive computer suite when it is not being used by other schools.

HUMANITIES

Geography

Provision in geography is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is consistently good; it leads to good learning.
- Most pupils show interest in lessons and achieve well.
- The department is managed well.
- Marking does not show pupils in Years 7-9 clearly enough standards attained or ways to improve.
- The department does not monitor or record pupils' progress in sufficient detail.

Commentary

134. By the end of Year 9, pupils' overall attainment is average. Teachers have, however, assessed pupils' work as above average overall over the past three years. The standard of work seen during the inspection was in line with what is expected nationally. A significant proportion of pupils reach the highest standards. Most pupils achieve well and make good progress through Years 7-9. Pupils with special educational needs usually achieve well, because teachers support them effectively.

135. Most pupils in Years 7-9 have good knowledge and understanding about a range of geographical environments. They explain well the relationship between human activities and the physical landscape. They interpret graphical and statistical data satisfactorily to explain, for instance, climatic variations across the world. Most read and interpret maps well. Many lower attainers, however, do not label maps accurately.

136. The overall attainment of pupils by the end of Year 11 is above average. Results in the GCSE examinations in 2002 and 2003 were below average at A*-C level, although in 2003 a quarter of pupils gained an A grade. The 2004 results were higher overall than those of 2003: boys' standards rose significantly, but the proportion gaining an A or A* grade fell. These fluctuating standards largely reflect the capabilities of pupils who opted for the course in any year. The work seen during the inspection was above average overall and pupils achieved well in lessons.

137. The geographical knowledge and understanding of most pupils in Years 10 and 11 are good. Pupils have good knowledge of places and of aspects of the physical development of the landscape. They use and interpret maps well. Most pupils conduct independent research carefully – collecting and analysing an appropriate range of data to investigate and evaluate a hypothesis. High attainers understand how to use complex data and confidently evaluate and use geographical models in their own work.

138. Teaching is consistently good and never less than satisfactory. Teachers are confident with their subject. Pupils know that they must behave well and work hard. Teachers manage such activities as group work very well, so that pupils learn effectively. Good use is made of fieldwork, ICT and the collection and use of data to enhance pupils' knowledge. In the best lessons, the activities motivate and interest pupils and ensure that all are actively involved in learning. Pupils then respond with positive attitudes to work. Pupils' independent work for their coursework is monitored and supervised carefully by their teachers. Marking is done regularly, but teachers do not give pupils sufficient indication of the standard they are working at or provide comments which show them clearly how to improve further.

139. The leadership of the department is satisfactory and its management good. As a result, satisfactory progress has been made since the previous inspection. The department does not have

a system that enables it to track in detail pupils' progress in Years 7-9, in order to identify and act quickly on any underachievement.

History

Provision in history is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is consistently good.
- Most pupils show interest in lessons. They achieve well in Years 7-9.
- The department is led very well and its performance well evaluated.
- Marking does not always tell pupils in Years 7-9 clearly enough how to improve their work.

Commentary

140. By the end of Year 9, pupils' overall attainment is average. From 2002 to 2004, teachers assessed pupils' work as close to average. The standard of work seen during the inspection was in line with that expected nationally. Most pupils achieve well and make good progress in Years 7-9. Pupils with special educational needs usually achieve well, because teachers give them suitable support. A very small proportion of pupils do not achieve as well as they should do, because, despite their teachers' help and encouragement, they do not concentrate sufficiently.

141. Most pupils in Years 7-9 have good knowledge and understanding of the past. They see and explain changes over time. Most understand adequately the reasons for past events. The highest attainers have very good understanding about the past and write very well at length in a mature style. Most pupils use sources successfully for information, and higher attainers make valid deductions from a range of sources. The lowest attainers tend to assume, mistakenly, that people in the past had the same values and attitudes as those in the 21st century.

142. The overall attainment of pupils by the end of Year 11 is below average. Results in the GCSE examinations in 2002 and 2003 were below average for A*-C grades; a low proportion gained A or A* grades. The results in 2004 were similar to those of 2003, although boys' attainment improved a little and that of girls fell. The work seen during the inspection was below average overall, but the work of a significant minority reached the highest standards. The majority of pupils achieve satisfactorily and higher attainers usually achieve well. This is because pupils are taught well and because they are prepared to work hard in order to succeed.

143. The majority of pupils in Years 10 and 11 have good knowledge of the topics they study and understand well why events happened. The highest attainers produce high quality extended writing, putting forward a point of view which is well supported by valid, historical evidence. They successfully evaluate the reliability and usefulness of sources. Lower attainers explain the causes of events and use sources adequately for information, but struggle to explain how reliable or useful a source might be to a historian.

144. Teaching is consistently good, sometimes very good, and never less than satisfactory. As a result, pupils learn well. The good teaching is characterised by strong subject knowledge, high expectations of behaviour and hard work, and effective classroom management. These create a purposeful learning atmosphere. Teachers use a suitable range of activities to motivate pupils and keep them actively involved in their learning. Lessons usually finish with a short session in which pupils and teachers review what has been learned. Although work is marked regularly, the comments do not always tell pupils in Years 7-9 clearly how they might improve their work in the future. The vast majority of pupils respond positively to good teaching, work hard and therefore achieve well.

145. The department is managed well and led very well. The head of department has built up an effective team of good teachers. As a result, the standards reported at the time of the previous

inspection have been maintained. There is a strong commitment to raising standards further. The department has reviewed its own performance and shown a willingness to accept change where such change would help to raise standards.

Religious Education

Provision in religious education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The subject leader provides a model of excellence to other teachers and to pupils.
- High aspirations and commitment to continuous improvement underlie the department's work.
- Pupils are very positive about the very good contribution RE makes to their personal development.
- As a result of good teaching, pupils in Years 7-9 achieve well.
- Pupils on the new GCSE course achieve very well.
- The agreed syllabus is insufficiently used to measure attainment at the end of Years 9 and 11.

Commentary

146. By the end of Year 9, pupils' work is at the standard expected in the agreed syllabus. Pupils describe accurately the distinctive beliefs and practices of Christianity and the other religions they study. They understand religious meanings and motives and reasonably explain their response to situations that require moral choices. During Years 7-9, pupils achieve well. They develop a good understanding of, and respect for, other people's beliefs and values. They show a good awareness of questions about life and of how different answers lead to different choices.

147. Pupils make good progress, not only in learning about religions, but also in learning about themselves, from their study of religion. An important factor in their good achievement is their very good attitude to learning: pupils recognise the very good contribution that RE makes to their personal development.

148. By the end of Year 11, pupils' work is average and at the standard expected by the agreed syllabus. When studying the morality of personal and social issues, for example, pupils respond with their own reasoning to the issues studied. They are positive in attitude and, with their good (but often non-specialist) teachers, their achievement is satisfactory. Pupils on the optional GCSE course have far more time for study and achieve very well. Their attitude to learning is exemplary and they are on the way to high results.

149. Teaching and learning are good in Years 7-9, satisfactory in Years 10-11 (but very good on the GCSE course). Teachers are very effective at engaging pupils' attention and interest. Both teachers and pupils make very good use of time in lessons. Teachers insist on the highest standards of behaviour. They plan lessons very well, with clear objectives. Teaching and learning are significantly better in Years 7-9, where the match of teachers to the RE programme is better than in Years 10-11. Accommodation and resources are good: most lessons take place in two specialist rooms.

150. Leadership is very good. The introduction of new, improved schemes of work shows clear vision and a strong sense of purpose about the future. Planning for further developments (such as the introduction of A-level courses) indicates high aspirations and commitment to continuous improvement. As a result of such knowledgeable, innovative leadership – together with the exemplary role model offered to other staff and to pupils – teaching, learning and achievement have become good. Management of the department is good, but evaluation of departmental performance through accurate measurement of pupils' attainment is an area for attention.

151. The major gain since the last inspection has been the appointment of the present head of department. Another gain has been the introduction of the GCSE course in Years 10 and 11, with a first entry in 2005. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. Already, existing aspects of excellence show the potential for provision to become very good indeed.

TECHNOLOGY

Design and technology

Provision in design and technology is **good**

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve well in practical work because of the good teaching they receive.
- The engineering and work-related courses are strong features of provision.
- High-ability pupils are not challenged sufficiently and so underachieve.
- There are health and safety problems in some food rooms and workshops.

Commentary

152. The overall standard of work on entry to the school is below average. By the end of Year 9, the overall standard is average. Pupils attain best in practical work in food, textiles, resistant materials and electronics. In a Year 9 food lesson, for example, the majority of pupils produced good bread rolls, well risen, with very good texture and even colour, but did not complete their theoretical work to the same level.

153. By the end of Year 11, the overall standard is average. In product design and engineering, practical skills are better than designing, but a better balance of the two elements is attained in graphic products. Whilst many pupils attain at least average standards in the more technical aspects of drawing, too many pupils are reluctant to draw freely for design purposes. Where pupils have regular access to computers, attainment in drawing, designing, research and presentation is often above average. The work-related and engineering courses significantly enrich pupils' experiences and raise their awareness of career opportunities. GCSE results are average. There has been a steady improvement in results in recent years, but too few high-ability pupils reach the highest grades in either design and technology or home management.

154. In Years 7-9, achievement is generally good. This is because setting arrangements in the workshops ensure that teachers know their pupils well and plan appropriately to meet all pupils' needs. In the home management course, mixed-ability grouping works well. The lack of teaching about modern fibres and their uses does, however, limit all pupils' understanding of this important development in the textile industry. In a food lesson, pupils' achievement in their written evaluations was poor: the lack of room ventilation, after bread-baking, lowered pupils' concentration.

155. In all aspects of the subject, pupils achieve well in gaining knowledge and understanding of processes and materials, because their learning is well supported by worksheets and course booklets. This level of support also, however, reinforces a dependency on teachers, so failing to prepare pupils adequately for the next stage of learning. Pupils with special educational needs achieve as well as everyone else.

156. Achievement by the end of Year 11 is generally good. Higher-attaining pupils use their knowledge and understanding of ICT well to research and develop designs. Computer-aided design and manufacture (CAD/CAM) is an important aspect of this success. In home management, pupils use computers to analyse the nutritional content of food when designing and modifying recipes. The best achievement occurs in graphic products, as a result of high quality coursework and well-constructed models. Even here, however, pupils are reluctant to "take risks" and think in innovative ways. The achievement of those lower-ability pupils who take product design is more limited than for other groups and is not helped by inadequate access to computers. These pupils tend to have

low self-esteem. For all ability groups, design is a weaker feature than making. The lack of opportunity to model in card, as an intermediate step in the designing and making process, impairs achievement.

157. Teaching and learning are generally good, occasionally outstanding, but with some unsatisfactory practice. The strengths in teaching lie in subject knowledge and craft skills. The strengths in learning stem from many pupils' desire to acquire new practical skills. The best teaching fully considers pupils' needs. In a minority of lessons, however, the focus is on "delivering the curriculum" or the teacher's convenience rather than helping pupils to develop their full potential. In these cases, pupils underachieve. The assessment of what pupils have learned is generally good.

158. The leadership and management of design and technology and of home management are good. There is a shared vision which has led to improvements in grades at GCSE level for middle-attaining pupils. The curricular provision is broad and balanced. Improvement since the last inspection has been good for those elements within the control of the subject managers. This is a good team (including its technical help). Improvement to accommodation has been unsatisfactory. Dust and fume extraction in workshops and poor ventilation in food rooms and workshops are serious health and safety issues that require attention.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

Art and design

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of teaching is very good: most pupils achieve to their full potential.
- Assessment for learning is very effective.
- The lack of classroom assistants limits the provision for pupils with special educational needs.

Commentary

159. Results in GCSE have been well above average for the past two years. In 2003, pupils performed very well in this subject, when compared with the national picture. In 2004, six pupils gained the highest A* grade. The number of pupils taking the examination course has increased over the past few years.

160. The standard on entry to the school is average. By the end of Year 9, the overall standard is above average – as, for instance, in the use of sketchbooks for observational drawing, for experimenting with materials and for developing ideas in two or three dimensions. In comparison with the initial studies of Year 7, the Year 9 work (involving research, design and models of insects and tribal masks) highlights the good progress made by the majority of pupils.

161. By the end of Year 11, the overall standard is well above average. Girls attain higher than boys, although boys attain above the expectations for boys nationally. Higher attainers talk knowledgeably about their work. They use their existing understanding of computers to work creatively with unfamiliar tools – as, for example, when distorting and layering digital images of their own faces. Lower-ability boys often attain equally well, but need more reassurance when faced with unfamiliar situations. Sketchbooks are very well used for personal research. Pupils understand the need for artists to value the environment.

162. Achievement in lessons in Years 7-9 is very good overall. Pupils in Year 7 gain good knowledge and understanding of drawing and painting techniques as well as how other artists use them to develop their own styles of expression. Achievement accelerates in Year 8, as pupils

expand their experience of designing, using materials such as batik. Deeper understanding still is evident in Year 9. Here, pupils learn to research, draw ideas together and see new possibilities for their own work.

163. Achievement by the end of Year 11 is very good. Higher attainers and the talented enjoy such new challenges as learning to experiment with computerised imagery. Because of the experiences they enjoyed in the earlier years and the climate for learning created by their teachers, they understand that being adventurous and learning from mistakes are part of the creative process. They research, recall information and easily enter into discussion with others, when studying artists or art-related ideas. This is particularly true when they apply them to their own work or locality.

164. Written work is an important part of pupils' achievement. The majority of pupils write clearly and accurately when making annotated notes, evaluative comments or more extensive writing. Pupils with special educational needs have more difficulty when writing is required: in this aspect, the lack of classroom assistants lowers their achievement.

165. Teaching and learning are very good. On occasions they are excellent. The strongest features are teachers' subject knowledge of contemporary art, high expectations and their interest in how assessment can inform learning. Teachers themselves are very good role models by demonstrating to pupils that they themselves enjoy learning by continuing their studies and research. Two missing elements of current provision are the lack of interactive displays to aid pupils' reflection and insufficient opportunities for discussion in pairs or small groups.

166. The leadership and management of the subject are very good. This is a very strong team of teachers and skilled technicians. Improvement since the previous inspection has been very good. The physical provision is better, assessment is now very effective, teaching is of a higher quality and the leadership of the department is forward-looking. Computers are used well, but limited in usefulness by not having one available in each art room. The torn floor-covering in one art room is a safety concern.

Drama

Provision in drama is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers' subject knowledge and enthusiasm are good.
- Leadership and management are good.
- Non-specialist accommodation limits what pupils can learn and do.

Commentary

167. The subject is taught to all pupils in Years 7-9 and as an option in Years 10 and 11. The overall standard of work throughout the school is a little above average. This is a good achievement. In the 2003 GCSE examination, 34 per cent of the 44 candidates obtained grades in the range A*-C.

168. Teachers know their subject well and show strong enthusiasm for it. Teaching is very good in Years 10-11. The enthusiastic commitment of pupils in Year 7 was excellently managed by the teacher as the class focused on improving their concentration and skill at listening. The teacher's encouraging, supportive style quickly established positive relationships and subtly fostered high expectations. In a Year 10 class studying *Blood Brothers*, the continual refocusing of the lesson and a very insightful first reading of Act 2, Scene 2 ensured that pupils made good progress in understanding the characters of the two brothers.

169. Leadership and management are good. The non-specialist parts of current accommodation limit the development of drama activities of a consistently high quality. Good progress has been made since the last inspection.

Music

Provision in music is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good group teaching of the guitar.
- There are clear assessment criteria and procedures in lessons.
- Pupils have a good attitude to the subject and so learn well.
- There are no significant weaknesses in the department.

Commentary

170. By the end of Year 9, pupils' overall attainment is in line with the national average. In teachers' assessments carried out at the end of 2003, around 90 per cent of pupils were judged to have achieved the national benchmark of at least Level 5, a good achievement mirrored in current work.

171. All pupils play keyboards confidently by the end of Year 9. They read staff notation with the help of some added letter names and have a good understanding of the rudiments of music. They are also familiar with common major and minor scales from which they select notes for their compositions. They acquire good background knowledge about (for example) instruments, historical styles and well-known composers.

172. In Years 7-9, pupils' learning and achievement are good. They enter the school with varied experience in the subject. They learn the basic elements of music through singing, rhythmic movement and playing simple instruments. They use musical notation well. Higher-attaining pupils have good opportunities to progress well on the guitar, due to the very expert teaching provided by the department. This is a significant improvement since the previous inspection. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress.

173. By the end of Year 11, pupils' attainment in GCSE is broadly average. In the 2002 and 2003 GCSE examinations taken together, 20 out of 35 pupils gained grades in the range A*-C. Three pupils gained grade A*. This is a similar pattern of success to that reported at the previous inspection.

174. In the work seen during the present inspection, the overall standard of performance, composition and listening was in line with the national average by the end of Year 11. Pupils play a fair range of instruments; some pianists and guitarists reach a high standard. Pupils study a wide variety of music, including that from both popular and classical European and Asian sources.

175. In Years 10-11, almost all pupils achieve well. Recruitment in Year 10 has risen to 23 pupils. Entry to the GCSE course is open to pupils whose levels of performance and background knowledge vary widely. Some pupils learn rapidly and reach high standards within two years. They quickly acquire a mature approach that is especially noticeable in their performances.

176. Teaching is good overall. Pupils benefit greatly from the high musical expertise of the staff. Teaching materials are of a high quality. Effective use is made of ICT in lessons, especially for the GCSE studies. Pupils' work is assessed well by means of a system that sets out clear criteria which pupils can easily understand.

177. Around 100 pupils take part in the choral, orchestral and guitar groups. Guitar-playing is a significant strength of the department. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Satisfactory improvement has been made in the provision of music since the last inspection.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Provision in physical education is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Practical lessons are well planned.
- The management of the GCSE course is unsatisfactory.
- Pupils do not use ICT sufficiently.

Commentary

178. By the end of Year 9, boys' and girls' standards in games are average, a satisfactory achievement. Most girls have the essential, basic passing skills in netball. In rugby, boys tackle well as a result of very good teaching. Boys and girls have the necessary basic racket skills in badminton.

179. The standard in practical work is average by the end of Year 11. In Years 10 and 11, there is clear improvement in the standard of badminton. A small number of pupils (and boys in particular) achieve well and show good potential as a result of teachers' high expectations. They perform a wide range of strokes and show suitable tactical awareness. In contrast, GCSE results have been well below national averages for a number of years. Written work for the GCSE course is badly organised and of poor quality – a hindrance to pupils' future revision. Standards in this course are not high enough and need to improve.

180. Pupils with special educational needs have good attitudes to the subject and make sustained efforts to improve. When teachers require them to cooperate and collaborate, they do so effectively. Most practical lessons proceed with good pace and purpose. Hardly any pupils miss taking part in these lessons without valid reasons.

181. Teaching varies from very good to unsatisfactory, but is satisfactory overall. It is good overall in Years 7-9. Lessons are well prepared and have clear learning objectives that are shared with pupils. Relationships are very good and result in pupils working with enthusiasm, enjoyment and determination. In theory lessons, however, information is too readily handed out without pupils having sufficient opportunity to reflect upon issues. Written coursework is monitored: some work is marked promptly and in detail, whilst other work is not. There is little evidence of pupils using ICT.

182. Leadership is broadly satisfactory. The management of the GCSE course, however, is unsatisfactory: planning and organisation are not effective enough to ensure that pupils are well informed about the topics they study or to secure improved examination results.

183. Documentation is thin in some important areas – as, for example, in analysing and reporting actions taken to improve examination results. Information and communication technology is used for planning lessons, but pupils do not use it enough in their own work. The assessment of pupils is satisfactory. The day-to-day running of the department is efficient. On this very large site, teachers are not helped by having to teach GCSE theory lessons in different rooms.

184. Extracurricular provision is good (except for sixth-form students, who have none). Many pupils (both boys and girls) regularly compete in sport. The department celebrates their achievements in public displays. Clubs, competitions and matches are provided at lunchtimes and after school. Some teams do well at local and regional levels. In 2003, for example, the Year 8 boys' soccer team proceeded to the second round of the English Schools' Championship. Since the

previous inspection, links with local sports clubs have been strengthened to encourage pupils to continue with sport after they leave school. There has been satisfactory improvement in the department since the previous inspection – with the exception of the GCSE course.

BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL SUBJECTS

Business Education

185. Two lessons of business studies were sampled in Year 10 on market research, business plans and advertising. Both were well taught – one particularly so. In both lessons, the teachers established a warm, firm relationship with pupils, set high standards and a brisk pace and planned all learning steps carefully. Their interesting material and well-targeted questions carried pupils along. Pupils achieved well as a result of the clear planning and good use of ICT resources, discussing their ideas together and, in one lesson, creating effective promotional material on computers.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Citizenship

Provision in citizenship is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils' involvement in practical projects is very good.
- Pupils work well together and show a strong interest in the subject.
- The assessment of pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding is not precise enough.
- Pupils do not receive enough training in the skills of discussion and debate.

Commentary

186. There are no national norms available for this subject, against which pupils' attainment and experience can be measured. Available evidence indicates that pupils' overall attainment is broadly average by the end of both Year 9 and Year 11. Pupils show a particularly strong interest in their practical projects. The subject therefore has the potential to reach an above average standard in all the aspects required by the National Curriculum.

187. Throughout the school, the achievement of pupils is satisfactory in all elements of the subject. In classroom lessons, they demonstrate proper concerns for such issues to do with citizenship as waste disposal and recycling, the misuse of drugs and cancer research. Whilst most pupils are keen to contribute in class, most lessons do not develop pupils' thinking and speaking skills sufficiently.

188. Class teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. Teachers generally succeed in imparting or reviewing information by means of worksheets, pupils' discussions in pairs and questioning. Many lessons do not, however, succeed in dealing with topics in sufficient depth or in organising pupils' research in a sufficiently challenging way.

189. Pupils contribute in small ways to the running of the school. They elect representatives to, and serve on, year councils. These, together with a teacher/facilitator, meet regularly and keep formal minutes. There is, however, no whole-school council. Such recent council issues as facilities in pupils' toilets and litter have been improved with fair success.

190. In the last school year, pupils were involved in an impressive range of practical projects. These included involvement with the workings of the County Magistrates' Court, awareness-training with the police, the *Readathon* project to raise money for cancer research, interviews with war

veterans and involvement in the school's own radio programme. The radio, together with a number of other media, was used in a major project on the use and abuse of drugs. The practical projects are well documented and displayed in school.

191. Good progress has been made in collating and recording data for the assessment of pupils' practical work and their achievement in lessons. Assessment is, however, insufficiently precise. Further refinement is also needed in the monitoring of citizenship topics that are dealt with in subject departments and in lessons on PSHE. The school did not fulfil its legal requirement to report to parents in 2004 on pupils' achievement in citizenship. It indicates that it will do so in future.

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM

In the inspection, 11 subjects and courses were inspected and are reported on in detail. Work in other subjects and courses was sampled and contributed to the overall picture of teaching and learning in the school.

The table below shows entry and performance information for courses completed in 2003 (the latest year for which validated, national comparative data are available).

Level 3 GCE AS-level courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades AE		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Art and design	3	67	80	0	24	20.0	29.9
Biology	9	67	65	11	11	20.0	20.6
Chemistry	9	67	73	11	14	16.7	24.1
Design & technology	1	100	75	0	15	30.0	25.3
Drama	2	100	87	0	20	40.0	30.6
Economics	2	100	74	50	20	35.0	26.4
English literature	5	100	86	0	19	28.0	30.2
General studies	24	100	74	25	18	35.4	25.7
Geography	1	100	74	100	20	60.0	26.5
German	2	100	82	0	19	30.0	28.9
History	3	100	81	33	20	40.0	28.6
Mathematics	7	71	62	29	17	28.6	22.1
Other sciences	11	46	71	36	16	22.7	24.3
Physics	2	100	69	0	14	35.0	22.7
Sociology	5	100	72	0	18	26.0	25.4

Level 3 GCE A-level and VCE courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades AE		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Art and design	8	100	99	13	50	80.0	87.5
Biology	5	100	96	40	39	76.0	78.6
Business (VCE)	8	97	65	0	15	60.6	60.1
Chemistry	5	100	98	0	49	68.0	84.9

Design & technology	5	100	98	0	35	64.0	77.9
Economics	4	100	99	75	52	90.0	88.3
Engineering (VCE)	3	67	n/a	0	n/a	46.7	n/a
English literature	6	100	99	50	47	90.0	86.5
French	2	100	99	50	52	90.0	87.6
Geography	9	100	99	57	45	82.2	84.0
History	4	100	99	50	45	85.0	84.6
Information technology (VCE)	9	94	78	11	23	64.4	64.9
Mathematics	7	100	97	43	56	88.6	88.8
Music	1	100	99	0	39	80.0	81.1
Physics	2	100	97	100	45	110.0	81.7
Psychology	7	100	94	14	39	88.0	77.7
Sociology	5	100	98	0	44	52.0	83.6
Theatre studies	3	100	99	0	40	73.3	83.6

Level 2 vocational qualifications

Qualification	No in final year	% gaining qualification		% gaining merit		% gaining distinction	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Business	3	67	n/a	0	n/a	0	n/a
Engineering	3	33	n/a	0	n/a	0	n/a
Health and social care	11	63	n/a	0	n/a	0	n/a

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

English literature

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The A-level results in 2003 and 2004 were a good achievement.
- The AS and A2 courses are very carefully planned and managed.
- Students make good progress in this subject.

Commentary

192. English literature is a popular subject in which students do well. Twenty-four students currently study the subject at either AS or A2 level. The overall achievement of all students is well in line with course requirements and the majority of students achieve well. In 2003, six students took and passed the A2 examination: three obtained either A or B grades. A larger number (nine) also achieved well in 2004.

193. Students in Year 13 have above average standards. They clearly enjoy their studies and demonstrate a very secure, confident knowledge and understanding of texts. A discussion of imagery in William Blake's three *Little Boy* poems, for example, drew together differing, thoughtful perceptions as well as an awareness of ambiguity – as, for instance, in the use of the word "father".

194. Students in Year 12, at the beginning of their AS course, applied the skills of interpretation and enquiry well in their study of Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*. Teasing out differing meanings for words and phrases (such as "electric cattle prods") enabled students to consider more deeply the effectiveness of description.

195. Teaching and learning are always at least good and are very good overall. They are characterised by students' rigorous search for interpretations and meanings, regularly informed by references to literary critics and other texts. Students learn effectively, because teachers persistently tease out their responses and support the emergence of alternative viewpoints. The assessment of work is very good. It provides clear evidence of excellent feedback, ensuring that students know how they can improve their studies.

196. Leadership and management are very good. Schemes of work are carefully designed and ensure that the syllabus is well covered. Teachers are encouraged to share in the teaching of the sixth form, so ensuring that students benefit from specialist knowledge and differing styles of teaching and learning. A residential visit to Stratford-upon-Avon, jointly organised with the drama department, enriches the work of students. The quality of provision has improved well since the last inspection.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

197. The overall standard of literacy across sixth-form subjects is average overall. Writing skills are good features of students' work in biology, chemistry, art, design and technology, history and ICT. Although speaking and listening are good features of students' work in mathematics, chemistry, art, ICT and history, students' ability to sustain extended discussion and ensure that their speaking is always clear and audible requires more attention to ensure that these aspects are always at least of a good standard in all subjects.

Mathematics

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students' achievement is good, because teaching is consistently good.
- Students have good attitudes to learning, but some Year 12 students lack confidence.
- Teachers encourage students to enjoy the subject.
- The retention rate from Year 12 to Year 13 is low.

Commentary

198. In 2003, results at A-level were broadly in line with the national average, with a slightly lower proportion of students than do so nationally gaining the higher (A and B) grades. This was a decline on 2002, when results were well above the national average. Results for 2004 show an improvement on 2003. The number of students continuing to the end of the course in recent years, however, is on the low side, considering the size of Year 11. Results in AS level in 2003 were above the national average, but this was a decline from 2002, when they were well above it.

199. Students currently in Year 13 are broadly in line with the national average. This is a good achievement for most, when compared to their GCSE results. They show a sound knowledge, for example, of trigonometric identities and use algebra with confidence.

200. Students in Year 12 are in the very early stages of their course. There is some lack of confidence with homework on difficult number work. In a good lesson seen, however, confidence was quickly restored by skilful teaching. Students work accurately on coordinate geometry, but some learning is still by way of using formulae that they still do not fully understand. The progress of most students is good and attainment broadly average.

201. Teaching is consistently good. It is often very good and occasionally excellent. Students learn and achieve well, because they enjoy the challenges set and teachers make the work interesting. There is good classroom discussion. Teachers use ICT well to help students to visualise abstract concepts. In one excellent lesson, the idea of getting a wardrobe through a door was used as an introduction to learning a difficult trigonometric formula. Occasionally, students lack the independence to solve homework questions for themselves, but they work well together and teachers make themselves readily available outside lessons to support them.

202. Leadership is good and management satisfactory. The new head of department has already made an impression with an enthusiasm for the subject that is being well received by students and fellow teachers. He recognises that the retention rate of students into the current Year 13 is lowish and is keen to establish regularly a further mathematics course.

Mathematics across the curriculum

203. Standards of mathematics, where it is seen in other subjects, are as expected nationally. Students in chemistry and physics manipulate equations well, and in geography rank-order correlation is suitably used. Statistical skills that involve drawing and interpreting graphs are well developed in history and economics.

SCIENCE

204. The main focus was on biology and physics, but chemistry was also sampled in two lessons. Chemistry is well led by a committed, enthusiastic coordinator. His love of the subject results in lessons that stimulate students to enter into extended, in-depth discussions. This was well illustrated by a very good lesson on trends in the ionisation energies of elements. Students engaged in animated debate on how electrons are attracted by the atom's nucleus, yet are shielded by the other electrons present. Students' achievements are at least satisfactory and usually good.

Biology

Provision in biology is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is often very good, arising from teachers' enthusiasm for the subject.
- Opportunities to use ICT are limited.
- Students are offered a restricted range of enrichment activities.

Commentary

205. Students regularly attain high grades in the AS and A2 examinations. Biology results were in line with the national average in 2003. The overall achievement of students is good. They learn enthusiastically, particularly when engaged in the investigations that are a major aspect of the courses.

206. In a very good Year 12 lesson involving microscopes, students were expected to sketch the complex internal structure of leaves. At first, they questioned the need to draw structures in an era of digital photography. Skilful argument, discussion and checks by the teacher soon, however, convinced the students that an essential element of the exercise was attention to detail and that their observational skills needed honing. This was sixth-form teaching at its best.

207. Teaching is at least good and often very good. Lessons are carefully planned and a variety of methods employed. In a very good Year 13 lesson, students were expected to prepare posters on meiosis and then share their conclusions with their peers. This approach checked both

knowledge and understanding and then applied it to new systems. The department's approaches increase students' confidence during Year 12.

208. The school's grounds are utilised to good effect for direct investigations involving both fauna and flora. In a good Year 13 lesson, after detailed instructions, students captured, marked, released and monitored the movement of different types of water snails in the school's pond. Its close proximity enhanced the time available for study. Students were interested and inquisitive.

209. The subject is admirably coordinated. Leadership and management are very good. Three teachers work well as a team, sharing both theoretical and practical lessons. Students appreciate the different strengths and interests that their teachers offer. Assessment is good: detailed records are kept of the students' accomplishments. In contrast, there are few extracurricular opportunities and restricted opportunities to use ICT within the science area. There has been sound improvement overall, however, since the last inspection.

Physics

Provision in physics is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The programme of study for A-level is challenging and exciting.
- Collaborative teaching with another local school widens students' horizons.
- Very few girls study the subject.

Commentary

210. Standards of achievement are satisfactory. In 2004, the three students who completed the course at A2 level passed the examination with grades in the range A-C, a sound achievement. Four of the five students passed the AS examination with good grades. In previous years, similar results have been achieved. Students entering the sixth form with good grades at GCSE generally obtain good grades at A2 and AS level. The standard of work seen in lessons matches this level of achievement.

211. Students work comfortably with such important physical concepts as acceleration, potential difference, exponential decay and the nature of experimental error. They express their ideas in appropriate scientific language and make very good use of ICT in coursework assignments. They show a mature commitment to their studies. When making spoken presentations, as part of a coursework assignment, students presented their findings cogently and answered questions confidently from a larger group of their peers. They make sound progress.

212. Teaching (currently undertaken by one member of staff) in informal, small groups is good. The teacher has good command of the subject. Each student's understanding and progress are closely monitored. The assessment of their work is done with care. Students know the level at which they work and understand what they need to do to improve. Extensive use is made of an external programme of study that offers a wide variety of approaches, encourages critical thinking and harmonises all areas of the syllabus. Collaborative teaching with another local school (including video-conferencing) enhances students' understanding and contacts.

213. The leadership and management of the course are satisfactory. The laboratory in which the subject is taught is drab and uninspiring. The take-up of the subject is low, especially by girls. Although there has been some increase in the number of students studying the subject since the last inspection, groups remain small.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve well as a result of good teaching.
- Teachers have good knowledge of the subject and how to teach it.
- A very large number of students chose not to continue with the subject after Year 12 in 2003.
- The course has been well selected to meet students' needs.

Commentary

214. Students embarked upon the course with standards below those normally found. The standard of work seen from students in Year 13 was average, indicating that these students achieve well. Their work indicated standards above those represented by the AS-examination results of 2004 and similar to those of 2003. Students' grades in the VCE examination in the subject in 2004 were at E level.

215. Students annotate their work informatively, recording in detail the development and testing of their solutions. They show a good understanding of the impact of technology on society. Students in Year 12 had only just started the course at the time of the inspection, but their early work showed that they were already developing the skills required for their studies.

216. Students learn well, because they are consistently well taught. All lessons observed were good (or better). Teachers place a high importance on students taking charge of their own learning. Students conduct research efficiently and present findings well. This approach not only benefits their learning in ICT, but also that in other subjects and prepares them well for higher education in any field.

217. Students respond well to the helpful comments made by teachers when work is assessed and have a clear picture of the progress they make. They enjoy, and benefit from, exploring social and moral issues connected to the subject. They display positive, mature attitudes towards their studies, so also helping them to learn. In 2004, however, an unusually high proportion of students chose not to continue studying ICT into Year 13. The school needs to ensure that such decisions are made for positive, not negative, reasons.

218. Both the leadership and management of the subject are good. The course followed is well chosen to match students' interests and needs as well as to offer good preparation for a wide range of employment opportunities in the region and for higher education courses. The subject leader has identified ways to raise standards and is effecting action. Those teaching ICT work well together to ensure effective delivery. No course was offered at the time of the previous inspection and therefore no comment can be made on improvement since that time.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

219. Students are confident in the use of ICT. In all subjects, their skills are more than adequate to meet the demands of their studies. Computers are very effectively used to enhance learning in business studies and economics – for example, to present case studies. The extensive computer network is well used by students, especially when undertaking research.

HUMANITIES

The main focus was on geography, history and psychology, but a Year 13 lesson in sociology (13 students) was also sampled. This sociology lesson revealed a reasonable, typical standard of work for this stage of the course. Teaching was satisfactory. Students received constructive, sympathetic guidance and support in planning and writing a practice essay on the relationship

between religion and social change. They responded positively and worked conscientiously, producing clear conclusions on the topic and sharing them appropriately with the rest of the class.

Geography

Provision in geography is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are consistently above the national average.
- Teaching is carefully planned and well informed.
- Students are well motivated and achieve well.
- Assessment is not rigorous enough to show students clearly how to improve their work.

Commentary

220. The overall standard of work is above average. Results in the A-level examination for 2003 were in line with national results. In 2004, examination results improved and all students gained either an A or B grade. The one student who took the AS-level examination taken at the end of Year 12 in 2003 did well. Similar results were achieved in 2004. These results represent good achievement.

221. Students in Year 12 have a good knowledge of, for example, how coasts are changed by the action of the sea and the weather, and understand how hard and soft rocks affect the shape of the coast. Students in Year 13 clearly understand how cities grow and change. They have a good understanding of population studies. One group (in a video-conference with students from another school) worked effectively in analysing photographs to reveal the main issues relating to population distribution and growth.

222. Throughout the sixth form, students have a good knowledge of exemplars that illustrate the topics they have studied. They have a sound grasp of geographical terms and use them correctly in written work. Students are skilled at investigative work, collecting and analysing data, and drawing appropriate conclusions. Throughout the course, the quality of essay work improves as students learn to write fluent, well-constructed essays that contain relevant detail.

223. Teaching is good overall. Teachers use their good knowledge of the subject and course requirements to give clear, well-structured explanations that quickly gain students' interest and enthusiasm. The objectives of lessons are not, however, made clear to students and the ends of lessons fail to assess what has been achieved. The best lessons are planned thoroughly, with a series of well-designed activities that encourage, motivate and appropriately challenge students.

224. Students are well motivated, attentive and work hard, persevering with complex pieces of work. They are rarely, however, given sufficient opportunity to discuss their ideas with one another. Teachers often dominate class discussion. Homework is set regularly, supporting classwork. Work is marked effectively. Assessment is not, however, rigorous enough: it does not give a clear indication of the standard reached or enable students to know clearly how to improve. There are appropriate opportunities for fieldwork and the use of ICT. Standards have improved since the previous inspection.

History

Provision in history is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is consistently good and promotes good learning.

- Students have very positive attitudes to their work and so achieve well.

Commentary

225. The standard of work is average in both Years 12 and 13. The AS results in 2003 were above average. In 2004, five of the 13 students who took the examination gained an A or B grade and all passed. At A-level, results tend to be above average for grades A and B. In 2004, all three students who took the examination gained an A or B grade – significantly above the 2003 national average. The standard of work seen during the inspection, from students only two weeks into their courses, was average. A minority reach a standard that is well above average. Most achieve well.

226. Students in Year 12 generally have sound knowledge and understanding of the topics they study. They showed a good grasp, for instance, of Luther's ideas and beliefs and why they were a threat to the Catholic church. The highest attainers are articulate in their answers and show considerable depth of understanding. Lower attainers do not explain themselves fluently. Students achieve well as a result of effective teaching.

227. The majority of students in Year 13 have sound knowledge and understanding. Higher attainers use their good understanding to evaluate such issues as the relative importance of events. They are prepared to ask questions and to challenge their teacher and other students with their own, alternative points of view, which they make effectively. This approach to their own learning, together with good teaching, means that they achieve well. Students have very positive attitudes to their studies. They prepare well for lessons, research topics independently and effectively, show interest and are involved actively in lessons.

228. Teaching is consistently good. Its key strengths are the high expectations and appropriately demanding work which teachers set. Good relationships lead to a positive learning atmosphere. Teachers use a suitable range of activities that both challenge and motivate the students, whatever their capabilities. Students are expected to take responsibility for their own learning through appropriate research tasks. Teachers make very effective use of the school's exceptionally good ICT facilities.

229. The leadership of the department is very good and its management good. Standards in AS- and A-level examinations have been maintained since the previous inspection. The number taking history has risen significantly in the past two years.

Psychology

Provision in psychology is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Lively, varied and well-planned lessons secure above average learning.
- The large, diverse classes achieve excellent understanding of the subject.
- The careful monitoring of performance leads to constant improvement.
- Increased student numbers have outstripped the accommodation.

Commentary

230. The subject is popular and available at GCSE and at GCE AS and A-levels. Pass rates at AS level are above average. In 2003, six of the 12 candidates achieved grades A or B and ten passed. A-level results, from smaller groups, tend to be above average. In 2003, all seven candidates passed, with one female student receiving an A grade. In 2004, all eight candidates passed and four gained grades A or B. At AS level, 18 out of 23 candidates (including four in Year 13) passed and ten gained grades A or B. Students generally achieve very well.

231. The standard of work of present students is above average. They respond well to lively, enthusiastic and informed teaching. In Year 12, they have quickly developed an understanding of what the subject involves and have increasing confidence in tackling issues within it.

232. Year 13 students show great enthusiasm for the subject and work conscientiously. The best written work is excellent - clearly, fully and accurately presented. They reported clearly and thoughtfully, for example, on explanations for schizophrenia, prompting more detail from one another's contributions, having looked earlier at material that showed the effect of social labelling on individuals' development. They thus acquired the important skill of critically evaluating their own work and that of others.

233. Teaching and learning are very good. The teacher manages the very large AS groups with confidence. She uses a suitable variety of group activities, introducing students to the subject and one another and encouraging cooperative problem-solving – as, for example, on the key topic of research design. The pace and rigour of work are maintained well over the three hours that classes are together, successfully focusing students on a full and precise understanding of their work.

234. Subject leadership and management are very good. The single teacher of the subject carefully monitors both the results of teaching and the progress of students, constantly seeking ways of securing improvement. She has established an effective system for providing feedback on performance and for students to assess themselves. Over the last decade, a set of good quality resources has been assembled. The subject base-room is, however, now far too small and alternative classrooms are becoming inadequate for Year 12. The departmental handbook is carefully organised and well written.

ENGINEERING, TECHNOLOGY AND MANUFACTURING

Design and technology

Provision in design and technology is **good**

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of teaching is good. As a result, most students achieve well.
- Students' coursework is above average in standard.
- Students require more instruction and practice in working under examination conditions.

Commentary

235. The overall standard on entry to the sixth form is average. Literacy levels are generally good, as evidenced in students' coursework folders and research studies for products. By the end of Year 13, the overall standard of work is average. Over the past few years, results at both AS and A-level have been broadly in line with the national average.

236. Current students understand examination criteria. This is because of their experience in assessing other students' work, using examination board guidelines and under the watchful eye of one of their teachers, who is an examination moderator. A higher-attaining girl showed very good skill at skimming and scanning written material and made perceptive observations. Students described this experience as "eye opening".

237. Whilst coursework is generally well presented and fulfils many of the criteria required, the school agrees that students fail to gain higher grades because of poorer performance in the formal examination, for which they require more practice. Attainment in practical skills is above average. Students benefit from opportunities to model in card and then modify designs in the light of greater understanding. Design influences from past eras (such as *Art Deco*) are evident in the cabinet, chair and clocks on display.

238. Orally, students are less confident in Year 12 than in Year 13. At this early stage in the course, the Year 12 students (coming from different schools) do not have common experiences or knowledge. Teachers have not been sufficiently briefed in advance to pitch the work at the right level for all of them. Year 12 students surprised their teacher by how little they had observed the influence of design movements in their own locality: for example, no one knew that there was an *Art Deco* building close at hand. They had little knowledge of contemporary designers except for Dyson. When put in groups and offered the opportunity to learn from experience, higher attainers emerged as leaders and tasks were carried out efficiently. Good use is made of ICT for research, data-analysis, design-drawing and the presentation of work.

239. Teaching and learning are good overall, although very good (and occasionally outstanding) lessons were seen. The scrutiny of work suggests, however, that there has been insufficient impact on developing innovative thinking or confidence under examination conditions. Students are offered good opportunities to visit factories (such as that of Nissan) in order to see modern machinery and processes. Competitions are entered, such as *The Audi Challenge*, and opportunities offered for feedback from the organisers.

240. Leadership and management of the subject are good. Improvement since the previous inspection has been satisfactory. The number taking the subject has increased as a result of the close working relations of the three consortium schools, but liaison procedures are not strong enough. Those students with a practical rather than academic bias benefit from the opportunity to study the BTEC First Diploma in Manufacturing Engineering.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

241. There was no major focus in this domain, but art and drama were sampled. In addition to one lesson of art that was seen, nine art students were interviewed and a sample of art work studied. The provision for art is very good and the number taking the subject is rising. Over the past few years, all students passed Alevel, although the proportion of those gaining the higher grades has been below average. Currently, high-quality teaching and resources are raising students' awareness, standards and motivation. Their achievement is very good.

242. In the outstanding art lesson seen, the teacher partly used her own work to talk through the means of assessing quality, dovetailing this approach with an exhibition of contemporary art that the students had recently seen. The experience created a buzz of interest and encouraged students to become much more innovative in their own work. The lesson was an excellent example of a teacher as a role model and the use of assessment to raise expectations and independence.

243. Drama is currently taught to 11 students in Year 12 and two students in Year 13. In the two lessons seen, the very good quality of teaching ensured that students made rapid gains in technique and achieved well. The overall standard of work is above average. The enthusiasm and drive of the teacher create a very positive environment in which students quickly develop their skills in performance. Self-evaluation was a particularly strong feature in the Year 12 class, as they rehearsed their interpretations of the opening of Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

BUSINESS

Business Studies

Provision in business studies is **good**

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Improving results have followed the reorganisation of the department.
- This well-resourced department makes good use of ICT.
- Higher examination grades and better coursework are required from male students.

Commentary

244. Attainment is average overall in this advanced vocational (single or double) award course. Whilst all 16 candidates passed in 2002, the highest grade was C. In 2003, results were average. The results for 2004 suggest an improvement: two candidates achieved grades A and B and others achieved reasonably. Achievement is satisfactory.

245. The work seen in class and students' folders is generally good. Written work is usually clearly and logically presented in a way that makes it easy to use for revision and reflects systematic teaching. Coursework shows appropriate use of ICT (including charts, tables and diagrams), particularly in some above average marketing and personnel projects. Students use computers intelligently to search for information and draft their work. Their overall performance is sound.

246. Learning is good overall. Students in Year 12, for instance, responded positively (although not always accurately) to a series of exercises designed to aid recall of the categories and objectives of business. They settled quickly to an Internet search to reinforce what they had learned, but did not always find it easy to extract the right information in a concise form. In another lesson, students worked enthusiastically on a crucial aspect of financial services – the purchase of a house. Year 13 worked confidently on the organisation of a visit with younger students, were alert to the complexities of the task and debated solutions fluently.

247. Teaching is good overall. Objectives are clearly explained and carefully pursued in well-paced lessons. Teachers show good knowledge of the subject and the needs of students and have a good rapport with them. Reviews of progress and briefings for new work are brisk. They are supported by good quality handouts and suitable, computer-generated material. Teachers ensure students stay on task, prompting them (through questions and oral feedback) to meet all the targets in their assignments. There is a regular use of worksheets to test, reinforce and structure learning.

248. The leadership and management of the subject are good. The department has recently been reorganised to include the related subjects of economics and ICT. Systems for monitoring and assessing students' work are clear, detailed and finely tuned. The *Young Enterprise* scheme takes place in Year 12. There are good links with employers. Teaching rooms are grouped together, well resourced and close to computers. The department has a clear vision for the future.

Economics

Provision in economics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve well through careful planning, good resources and regular monitoring.
- Work in small groups is under-used as a basis for whole-class discussion and presentation.

Commentary

249. Achievement is good overall. Examination results are above average. In 2003, three of the four candidates achieved a B grade. Practically all candidates in the (usually slightly larger) AS groups have passed in the last three years. In 2004, the results suggest the continuation of a similar level of performance. All five Alevel candidates passed, with grades between A and D. Students' performance in this subject tends to be above what they achieve in their other subjects.

250. The standard of current written work is good. Although some work is untidy and undated, the content is generally accurate. Good use is made of the Internet to supplement other information. Tests and essays are regularly set and marked. Monthly news reports demonstrate the link between the subject and the world of work. Although there is not always written evidence of

constructive comment or feedback from teachers, notes are frequently added to work as a result of classroom discussion.

251. Most students show sound skill in research, comprehending theory, presenting information and applying it to the solution of problems. They summarise their fellow students' work accurately. They are less proficient (though broadly satisfactory) in answering questions orally or in explaining the material they have researched. For example, they lacked fluency in one Year 13 lesson in explaining the good quality powerpoint screens they had designed on labour-market trends. Year 12 students, likewise, recalled information from previous lessons, but (with two exceptions) did not develop their answers beyond a minimal response to the teacher's direct questions.

252. Teaching is good overall, although some is only just satisfactory. Year 13 lessons open with clear explanations and provide a variety of stimulating learning opportunities. Material is linked to current events – as, for example, to the Trades Union Congress and to the job market. Teachers usually reinforce well what students have learned and ensure its accuracy. In contrast, Year 12 students, in a somewhat hurried lesson, were provided with a variety of well-structured learning experiences, but were not prompted to clarify or extend their answers on the factors of production. The teacher maintained a good rapport with the class, but did not take time to check students' understanding fully or practise the study skills necessary for good quality A-level work.

253. Leadership and management are good. The course is well organised, has an excellent scheme of work and can access good written and computer-based resources. Year 13 students settle quickly to work and learn at a brisk pace.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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

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