

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **MANDEVILLE UPPER SCHOOL**

Aylesbury

LEA area: Buckinghamshire

Unique reference number: 110497

Headteacher: Mr P J R Patchett

Lead inspector: Paul Cosway

Dates of inspection: 31 January - 3 February 2005

Inspection number: 268851

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

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## **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Type of school: Modern (non-selective)  
School category: Community  
Age range of pupils: 11 to 18  
Gender of pupils: Mixed  
Number on roll: 1008

School address: Ellen Road  
Aylesbury  
Buckinghamshire  
Postcode: HP21 8ES

Telephone number: 01296 424472  
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Appropriate authority: The governing body  
Name of chair of governors: Mr Keith Hickson

Date of previous inspection: 5 and 6 March 2003

## **CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL**

The school is a mixed non-selective school to the south of Aylesbury. It is designated as a community school. The total number of pupils is 1008, including 96 in the sixth form. Most come from the two most socially deprived areas of Aylesbury, and the proportion of adults in these areas with higher education is low. An above-average percentage of pupils has special educational needs and the proportion with statements is higher than in most schools. An above average number of pupils qualifies for free school meals. Almost a quarter of pupils represent minority ethnic cultures: while these span four continents, most of the families originate in Pakistan. About 15 per cent of the pupils come from homes where English is not the first language. These figures are much higher than the average nationally.

The selective system in Aylesbury provides grammar school places for about a third of the town's secondary-aged pupils. As a result, the standards on entry to this school are low compared with those in most secondary schools. The popularity of the school has been rising and the number of pupils on roll has almost doubled over the last five years. It is now oversubscribed, with a waiting list for places. A higher proportion of students than average joins or leaves the school after the normal entry date. Only 75 per cent of the current Year 11 began their education here. It has a small sixth form, which has links with other schools and colleges and good vocational links. There is a sixth form consortium arrangement in the local area, but no students at this school were involved in this at the time of the inspection. The area around the school is one where the high cost of housing makes it difficult to recruit and retain teachers and this has made it difficult for the school to raise attainment in some subjects.

The school achieved specialist status in 2004 as a specialist sports college. It was last inspected in March 2003.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
2734	Paul Cosway	Lead inspector	English as an additional language
2665	Jenny Mynett	Lay inspector	
14490	Susan Jackson	Team inspector	History Citizenship
2183	Peter Thompson	Team inspector	Design and technology
1709	Sandra Tweddell	Team inspector	English
18261	Anthony Hill	Team inspector	Art and design
7428	Raymond Jardine	Team inspector	Science
13217	Malcolm Butterworth	Team inspector	Physical education
19528	Roland Portsmouth	Team inspector	Mathematics
30911	John Barton	Team inspector	French
8052	Kenneth McKenzie	Team inspector	Information and communication technology (ICT)
31673	John Gwyer-Roberts	Team inspector	Music
4486	Michael Weller	Team inspector	English (post 16) Special educational needs
32344	Janet Waters	Team inspector	Health and social care (post 16)
13122	Stephanie Matthews	Team inspector	Business education (post 16) Work-related learning
32122	Judith Straw	Team inspector	Religious education
8632	Derrick Beer	Team inspector	Geography

The inspection contractor was:

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## PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

### OVERALL EVALUATION

**This is an improving school, giving a satisfactory education to its pupils and having many good aspects to its work.** Most pupils achieve well, and their personal development is good. Teachers plan lessons well and establish good relationships with their pupils, which helps them to learn. The good teaching and the positive learning ethos help pupils, most of whom have well below average attainment on entry, to grow in self-confidence and to attain examination results above the national average in some subjects. Behaviour is generally good, but a small minority of pupils can be disruptive. The headteacher gives very good leadership, supported very well by his senior team, and this is bringing improvements and raising standards. It gives satisfactory value for money. Since the last report, the school has become over-subscribed and the school of first choice for many families.

#### The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Good teaching and learning mean that pupils make good progress overall;
- Good relationships lead to good attitudes and a positive ethos for learning;
- Pupils achieve well in many subjects and attain results close to the national average in some, such as physical education and religious education;
- Attainment needs to rise further, particularly in design and technology and French;
- The provision for pupils' care, welfare, health and safety is very good in the main school;
- Many pupils have low levels of literacy, and still more needs to be done to help them;
- The provision for pupils with special educational needs is good;
- Some middle managers are very effective, but not all;
- A few disaffected pupils disturb lessons on occasions and are entered for few or no examinations because they do not complete their courses;
- Homework is not monitored rigorously enough;
- Very good links with the local community enhance pupils' learning opportunities;
- Attendance is improving but is still below average in the main school.

There has been **satisfactory improvement** in the short time since the last inspection, especially in teaching, the provision for pupils with English as an additional language and financial management.

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

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

**Pupils achieve well.** On entry to the school, attainment is well below average, overall. Pupils make good progress and in some subjects achieve results close to the national average.

- 2004 results had not been validated at the time of the inspection but, in the national tests for Year 9, pupils are likely to be well below average, overall. Pupils make satisfactory progress from their levels of attainment on entry and attain well in mathematics. Results have risen in recent years
- GCSE and GNVQ results were well below the average nationally, but pupils achieved well and their results were above those in similar schools. The best results were in physical education, drama, business studies, health and social care and religious education. Performance in design and technology subjects and French was weaker. Results in English, mathematics and science were well below the national average. Standards are rising. Attainment is below average

overall but improved teaching is helping pupils, including those speaking English in addition to their home language, to achieve well

- In the sixth form, results have been in the bottom five per cent of all schools nationally, but students achieve well, taking into account their attainment at GCSE

**Pupils' personal development is good.** Many enter with low self-esteem, but quickly gain in confidence, taking pride in the school and their own achievements. **Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are good.** With few exceptions, pupils' attitudes to school and their behaviour are good and they form good relationships. Attendance is rising, but is still below average. Pupils are punctual to school and to lessons.

## **QUALITY OF EDUCATION**

**The quality of education provided by the school is good. Good teaching motivates pupils to take interest in their lessons and learn well.** Lessons are well planned. Teachers have good knowledge of their subject and almost all keep good control. In the few cases where lessons are less effective, it is because the teachers do not motivate or challenge pupils sufficiently and class management is not sufficiently strong.

The curriculum is satisfactory. It is being broadened further to provide a wider range of vocational courses. A very good partnership with the community contributes to the effectiveness of the education the school provides. It works hard to build good links with parents, although not all support their children's education by sending them to school regularly. Marking and assessment give good guidance to pupils, but not in all subjects. The provision for pupils' care, welfare, health and safety is very good in this very inclusive school.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

**The leadership and management of the school are satisfactory.** The headteacher gives very good leadership, as do senior managers. Middle managers vary in their effectiveness, but some give very good leadership. The school's capacity for future improvement is good, because of the commitment of so many in the school, including pupils, to do well. The governing body fulfils its role well. It monitors the work of the school effectively and ensures that the school meets all statutory requirements.

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

Parents are pleased with the school and believe that it is helping their children to make good progress. Many who live out of the school's catchment area are glad that their children have succeeded in gaining a place. Around a third of parents who responded to the questionnaire were concerned about behaviour, and about a quarter about bullying or homework. The inspectors found that there were some grounds for their concerns, although bullying is dealt with quickly and well. High numbers (96%) of pupils like the school and believe that they are taught well, but just over half share their parents' concerns about behaviour, homework and bullying.

## **IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED**

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

1. Continue to work to raise standards by:
  - improving provision in areas that are underperforming, such as design and technology and French;
  - raising levels of literacy, especially writing skills;
  - improving the attitudes and attendance of the few pupils, especially in Year 11, who can disrupt their own learning and that of others;
  - monitoring homework and the completion of course work more rigorously.
2. Further develop the expertise of middle managers, so that they are better able to lead, manage, monitor, evaluate and develop their areas of responsibility.

## OVERALL EVALUATION – SIXTH FORM

The sixth form gives the many students who would not normally go on to further education a satisfactory education and its cost-effectiveness is satisfactory. Most students achieve well because staff go out of their way to cater for their individual needs, although standards are well below average. Students learn well because of good teaching. Leadership and management are satisfactory. There has been satisfactory improvement since the last inspection.

The main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The sixth form offers good access to students who require different ways into higher or further education and employment
- Students make good progress from a low entry point, and many leave with a range of good qualifications
- Most students have positive attitudes to their work and behave well
- Teaching in the sixth form is good
- The curriculum offers students an appropriate, if narrow range of courses, but the timetabling of the courses is unsatisfactory
- Students have too few opportunities to exercise their independence
- The head of the sixth form has insufficient time to monitor the quality of provision and the progress that students make
- The accommodation for sixth form students is unsatisfactory
- Attendance is unsatisfactory and is a focus for action by all staff
- Many students have below average literacy skills

## QUALITY AND STANDARDS IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES OF THE CURRICULUM

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

Curriculum area	Evaluation
English, languages and communication	Provision in English is satisfactory, and is improving under the new leadership. Teaching and learning are good, so students achieve well.
Science	Provision is satisfactory for the small group of students in Year 12. Standards are well below average but students achieve satisfactorily.
Hospitality, sports, leisure and travel	The provision in physical education is very good. Teaching and learning are very good, so students achieve very well and attain standards that are about average. Leadership and management are very good.
Business	Provision is satisfactory. Day-to-day management is good and leadership satisfactory. Teaching is good, and learning satisfactory because not all students use their learning skills effectively.
Health and social care	The overall provision is satisfactory. Students achieve well although standards are below average. Teaching and learning are good.

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



**ADVICE, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT**

The quality of advice, support and guidance is satisfactory overall. Students are cared for well by their tutors, but their tutors have had little training for this role so rely on their existing teaching skills. The sixth form caters for many students who would not normally stay in education, many of whom are immature and need much guidance as to how to behave appropriately. The emphasis on this by staff results in some loss of autonomy for students, so they do not feel that they have a voice in how the sixth form is run.

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

The head of the sixth form works hard to enable students of all backgrounds and circumstances to succeed in the sixth form, but she has many other duties so does not have time to lead and manage as she would wish. Leadership and management are therefore satisfactory. She has no deputy, although there are plans to appoint one in the near future, so monitoring and evaluation of the provision rely on informal systems which do not enable a clear overview of provision.

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

Very few students completed the questionnaire, so the responses need treating with caution. Almost all enjoy being in the sixth form, think the school is well run and feel that they are on suitable courses. There is strong disagreement amongst them about whether or not the teaching is challenging, staff are expert in their subjects and help them to study and whether or not they have a trusted adult to turn to. The responses were equally divided about the range of outside activities being worthwhile. Many feel that homework is not useful and that the advice they received about what to study and their future plans was not helpful. Many also feel that they are not listened to or treated with respect and that students do not get on well together.

The inspection team found, when talking to a larger number of students, a range of views, but they were less critical than the questionnaire had implied. Many enjoy being in the sixth form and appreciate the support they receive. Others think that the curriculum offers little choice and that the subjects they wish to study clash.

The adverse comments came more from Year 12 than Year 13. They have suffered from a timetable that was devised to take account of consortium arrangements that, through no fault of the school, did not materialise. The inspection team agreed with many of their comments, in particular that they are short of resources and that their timetable and accommodation are in need of review.

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

### **STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS**

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

Pupils achieve well in the main school and the sixth form. Standards are well below average compared with schools nationally.

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

- Attainment in some subjects was close to or above average in GCSE examinations in 2004.
- Pupils achieve well in most subjects, but not in all.
- Standards are rising in the school.
- A small number of pupils do not complete their coursework or attend regularly enough, and so leave without any qualifications.
- Problems with literacy are hampering the achievement of a large minority.

#### **Commentary**

1. The attainment of pupils on entry to the school has been well below average in all years, except for the current Year 7 students whose scores were below, rather than well below, average in the Year 6 national tests. Pupils attend the school from a wide area. Almost all failed to gain a grammar school place in the town's selection tests at the age of 11. Most pupils have a reading age of about nine years on entry. Test results show that a much lower proportion than average have above average levels of literacy and numeracy.
2. In the 2003 and 2004 General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) examinations, pupils' results were well below the national average, but above the average of similar pupils elsewhere. The school met its targets for GCSE performance in 2004. The proportion of pupils who left without any examination success was relatively high, compared with national averages and with similar schools, but this was mainly because 12 pupils did not attend for their final examinations, for reasons beyond the school's control.
3. Achievement is good overall. Pupils make clear progress from their levels of attainment on entry in most subject areas. In some subjects, such as music, they are making very good progress. Pupils achieve well for two main reasons. First, the school has worked hard to establish a common teaching style that is effective in helping pupils to learn well. Second, it has worked on a number of successful initiatives to create an ethos in which pupils will listen, concentrate and learn in class. In those areas where achievement is not good, a number of factors are to blame. Some older pupils lose interest in school and fail to complete coursework for examinations or to attend school regularly. This is often the result of social pressures, exacerbated in some cases by courses that are not relevant enough to their needs. In other instances, teaching is not motivating the pupils sufficiently to encourage them to learn and this leads to discipline problems that disrupt the learning of whole classes. In addition, class work and homework assignments are sometimes unfinished, leaving pupils without the materials they need to gain good coursework marks, or for revision. The school is improving its mentoring programme to deal with some of these issues and reviewing its curriculum to make it as suitable as possible for its pupils. In addition, there have been staffing problems that have resulted in pupils being taught by a series of temporary teachers and this has disrupted their studies. In recent years, these difficulties have resulted in an above average number of pupils failing to gain any examination passes at the end of Year 11, and more pupils than is the case nationally leave with fewer than five passes at any grade.

**Standards in national tests at the end of Year 9 – average point scores in 2004 (unvalidated)**

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	30.8 (32.0)	33.3 (33.4)
mathematics	33.6 (34.4)	35.5 (35.4)
science	30.0 (31.6)	33.1 (33.6)

*There were 162 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year. Validated data for 2004 were not available at the time of the inspection.*

- Attainment in the national tests at the end of Year 9 in 2003 was below the national average in mathematics and science, and average in English. It was below the national average overall, but attainment was well above average when compared with that in schools with similar pupils. In 2004, results dropped in English and science. At the time of the inspection, validated national results were not available for comparison. However, the indications are that in mathematics results were below the national average and they were well below in the other two subjects. In 2004, compared with similar schools, they were close to average overall: average in mathematics and below average in English and science. Across the curriculum, problems with literacy – especially with writing – are affecting standards. Both boys and girls have attained results well below the national average in the national tests in recent years. Boys have attained less well than girls, as has been the case nationally.
- The finding of the inspection is that attainment at the end of Year 9 is well below the national average overall, but that it varies from subject to subject. In most subjects it is below average, but the cumulative effect of so many below average subjects, coupled with poor writing skills, leads to attainment being well below average overall. It is above average in physical education, partly because of the quality of the provision but also because standards are not held back, as they are elsewhere, by low literacy standards. Pupils achieve well. Attainment is average in information and communication technology (ICT) because of improvements in provision and also because pupils are achieving very well. Attainment is below average in drama, mathematics, geography, religious education, design and technology, art and music. Pupils achieve very well in music and well in all the other subjects because of their good attitudes to learning and the quality of the teaching. Attainment is well below average in the important core subjects of English and science, but their achievement is good in English, satisfactory in science. Attainment is well below average in French and achievement is unsatisfactory. This is because of staffing problems over the last two years and the lack of sufficient curriculum time for the subject.

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

	School results	National results
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-C grades	36 (33)	52 (52)
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	81 (67)	89 (88)
Percentage of pupils gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	88 (86)	96 (96)
Average point score per pupil (best eight subjects)	31.5 (28.4)	41.1 (40.6)
Capped average point score per pupil (best eight subjects)	25.3 (23.4)	34.9 (34.7)

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*There were 129 pupils in the year group, 61 boys and 68 girls. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.*

## Standards in GCSE and Equivalent Qualifications

	School results	National results
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-C grades	36	52
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	81	89
Percentage of pupils gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	88	96
Average point score per pupil (best eight subjects)	268.7	340.3
Capped average point score per pupil (best eight subjects)	215.0	282.8

*There were 129 pupils in the year group, 61 boys and 68 girls.*

6. Overall, pupils' performance in GCSE examinations in 2004 was well below the national average, but above that in similar schools. In recent years it has been consistently well below average overall, but has been rising. It is rising slightly more rapidly than the national trend. Compared to pupils elsewhere with similar levels of attainment at the end of Year 9, pupils at this school make better than average progress and their achievement is good.
7. The proportion of pupils who gained five or more A\* to C grades in their GCSE examinations was well below the national average in 2004, but this group of pupils achieved particularly well - well above the average for similar schools. The proportion that attained five or more GCE passes at A\* to G grades was also well below the national average, but better than pupils in similar schools. However, lower attaining pupils were not so successful. The proportion that attained at least one pass at any grade was well below the national average and below the average for similar schools. Too many pupils left the school at the end of Year 11 without any qualification.
8. Results in GCSE examinations in 2004 were close to the national average in physical education, drama, religious studies, business studies and health and social care. Pupils in history and English literature attained results below national averages, but more than double the pass rate in most other subjects. This represents good, in some cases very good, achievement by pupils most of whom entered the school with well below average levels of attainment. Attainment was well below average in most other subjects, including English, mathematics and science, and significantly below in design and technology, where there were a number of staffing problems beyond the school's control. Provision is improving in this subject area and pupils are achieving better than they were a year ago.
9. Both boys and girls have attained results well below the national average since the last report, when they were also well below average. Although girls' results have often been higher than boys' in recent years, boys' attainment improved in 2004 and was higher than the girls'. The inspection did not find any significant difference in the attainment of boys and girls.
10. Pupils are now achieving well in most subjects and their attainment has improved. It is now below, rather than well below, the national average, overall. It varies from subject to subject. In most subjects it is below average. In the core subjects of English, mathematics and science, improved teaching is raising standards. The current Year 11 came in to the school with very low levels of attainment in the national tests at the age of 11. They are achieving well overall and by the time they take their GCSE examinations, their standards are likely to be below average in mathematics and science and well below in English.

11. Attainment is above average in physical education, because of the quality of the provision. Pupils achieve well. It is average in art, because of the quality of the teaching. Attainment is below average in GNVQ ICT because of the backlog of poor provision in earlier years, but pupils are achieving well. Attainment is below average in drama, mathematics, science, geography, history, religious education and music. Pupils achieve very well in music and well in all the other subjects because of their good attitudes to learning and the quality of the teaching. Attainment is well below average in English and design and technology, but their achievement is good in English, because of good teaching, and satisfactory in science. Attainment is well below average in French and achievement is unsatisfactory. This is because of staffing problems over the last two years and the lack of curriculum time for the subject. However, provision is improving under the very capable, relatively new, head of department.
12. The greatest barrier to raising achievement has been the quality of teaching, the poor attendance of some pupils in their final year and the inability of some pupils to complete homework and coursework assignments. The school prioritized the improvement of teaching and this has been successful. In departments where examination results have been disappointing, standards are now rising and teaching is at least satisfactory. Attendance levels are rising as a result of the school's efforts and the improved mentoring of pupils. It is necessary for these initiatives to continue and for homework to be more rigorously monitored.
13. Pupils with special educational needs achieve at least as well as others in the mainstream classes, because teachers know them well and respond sensitively to their needs. Where there is support from teaching assistants, achievement may be higher. Pupils achieve very well when withdrawn to the study support department, because of the very good teaching and support they receive and the positive attitudes and good behaviour they bring to lessons. The pupils for whom English is an additional language are provided for well and their achievement is good. Gifted and talented pupils are achieving very well in physical education, English, mathematics and music, but in some areas, little is planned to challenge them. They achieve satisfactorily overall.

### **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	67.7 (75.0)	89.4 (92.6)
Percentage of entries gaining A-B grades	16.1 (15.9)	32.6 (35.3)
Average point score per student	92.1 (91.6)	258.2 (263.3)

*There were 19 students in the year group. The figures in brackets are for the previous year.*

14. Attainment in the sixth form has been very low in recent years, in the bottom five per cent of all schools, as it was at the time of the last report. It is rising, as more students take vocational courses, such as business studies and health and social care. Success is more variable on traditional advanced level courses of the General Certificate of Education (GCE AS and A2 levels) and it is doubtful whether these are appropriate for the calibre of students entering this sixth form. The school is, rightly, revising its curriculum to meet the needs of a changing cohort. In some, such as English, the students are achieving well, as a result of teaching that is well adjusted to their needs. In physical education, students' learning builds well on the good foundation in Years 7 to 11. The students achieve well and attain results close to the national average. In other subjects, the results are very low, and it is not always clear what value they are gaining. Overall, attainment on entry is well below the national average. Achievement is good overall. The difference between the attainment of boys and girls is no greater than it is nationally. The students with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language achieve well.

15. In the table below, the subjects in bold are those inspected in depth. Other subjects were sampled and judgements included where there was enough evidence for them to be secure. Not all subjects were sampled.



SUBJECT	ATTAINMENT	ACHIEVEMENT
English	Below average	Good
Biology	Well below average	Satisfactory
Health and social care	Below average	Good
Art	Below average	Good
Physical education	Average	Good
ICT	Below average	Good
Business studies	Below average	Good

16. Literacy, numeracy and ICT standards in the sixth form are below average. The achievement of pupils with special educational needs is good. In lessons where they receive individual support it is sometimes better than that of other pupils.

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

The good provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development helps to ensure that their personal development is also good. This is reflected in the good attitudes and behaviour of most pupils in the school. Despite the best efforts of the school, too many parents are still not ensuring their children attend regularly, so that levels of attendance are below the national average. Sixth form students' behaviour is very good and their attendance is satisfactory.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Very many pupils in the lower school demonstrate good attitudes and behaviour. They are enthusiastic, respond well in lessons and behave well around the school.
- The attitudes and behaviour of a small minority of pupils in Years 10 and 11 are more challenging and can disrupt lessons.
- Relationships throughout the school are good, create a harmonious atmosphere and an effective learning environment.
- The school promotes its pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness well.
- Too many pupils are not attending school regularly and this is impacting on their levels of achievement.
- Students in the sixth form demonstrate mature attitudes to their work and behave very well.

### **Commentary**

17. The attitudes and behaviour of pupils continue to improve. Teachers have high expectations of pupils and the large majority of students work hard to achieve them. Pupils and parents generally have positive views about the school. Parents are pleased by the way their children are encouraged to work hard and achieve their best. This helps the pupils to become mature and independent. The pupils spoke enthusiastically about the improvements to the school, the way teachers encourage their independence, their keenness to learn and participate in all the school provides. Pupils take full advantage of the many clubs, sporting activities and trips and these help to enrich their learning experience.
18. The behaviour of most pupils is good, both in lessons and around the school - particularly in the lower school. The staff have developed effective behaviour strategies. These have been consistently applied and have raised the standard of behaviour over the last few years. There is a clear focus on promoting good behaviour and supporting those individuals whose attitudes and behaviour do not meet the standard that the school sets. All this is supported by a well-defined programme of rewards and sanctions to which most pupils respond well and find motivating. Behaviour is best in practical lessons, because these engage pupils the most, and in the majority of lessons pupils learn without being disturbed by others. However, there is a number of pupils in Years 10 and 11 whose behaviour is unsatisfactory. This small minority of pupils can be deliberately disruptive in lessons that are not well managed, or where teaching does not capture their interest and attention.

19. The school has a strict code of conduct and applies exclusions fairly and as a last resort in its behaviour management system. Permanent exclusions are only applied after all else has failed and for serious or persistent misdemeanors. The level of short fixed-term exclusions is high because of the 'zero tolerance' approach, but is reducing, with only a small number of pupils re-offending. The school has very good monitoring and referral links with outside agencies to 'fast track' and follow-up instances of unacceptable behaviour.

**Exclusions**

***Ethnic background of pupils***

***Exclusions in the last school year***

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	608	156	7
White – Irish	2	2	0
White – any other White background	13	2	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	12	2	0
Mixed – White and Black African	2	1	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	17	5	0
Asian or Asian British – Indian	5	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani	110	10	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	4	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	13	2	0
Black or Black British – African	15	1	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	11	2	0
Chinese	1	0	0
Any other ethnic group	1	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	7	0	0

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

20. Pupils respond well to the opportunities presented to take responsibility, develop their initiative and contribute to activities around school. Pupils act as librarians, team captains for inter-form and inter-school competitions and buddies for the new pupils in Year 7. The student leader system provides older pupils with opportunities to undertake specific duties, develop their maturity and act as role models to the younger pupils. Relationships between staff and pupils, and amongst the pupils themselves, are generally good, and sometimes very good. Pupils work well together in pairs and small group situations and this collaboration helps to promote a positive learning environment. There are few incidents of serious bullying, harassment and oppressive behaviour in the school, and when incidents do occur they are dealt with promptly and effectively. Pupils are trained to act as peer mentors. Most pupils and parents feel the school deals well with any incidents and that neither bullying nor racism are major problems in the school.

21. The attitudes of pupils with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language are often positive and, when well-supported, they participate well in lessons - particularly in music and physical education.
22. The overall provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good, and this is reflected in the good personal development of most pupils in the school. Pupils' spiritual development is supported especially well in religious education lessons. In addition, teachers in other subjects, such as geography, science, music, and personal, social and health education, introduce a strong element of spirituality into their lessons whenever there is an opportunity. Pupils have good self-awareness and reflect on the meaning and purpose of life in some lessons. They study other religions and reflect on issues of belief, forming judgments that enable them to develop insights. As a result, they both respect the beliefs of others and have a clear understanding of them. The school meets its statutory obligations satisfactorily in respect of offering a daily act of collective worship through assemblies, enhanced by the 'thought for the day' process in tutor groups.
23. There is a clear moral code throughout the school. This is reinforced well by teachers in personal and social education and citizenship lessons, and by staff around the school. Pupils know what is right and what is wrong, have a clear knowledge of what is expected of them and respond well to the expectations of the school. Lessons often test their powers of reasoning as they debate ethical issues. Pupils' knowledge and awareness is reflected well in their actions. They express concern for others in their community and for those less fortunate than themselves. This is demonstrated in regular fund-raising events for charities, including the recent tsunami disaster appeal.
24. Pupils' social skills are particularly well developed in physical education lessons and through the extra-curricular music, choir and sports' activities. Pupils are keen to be involved in a range of activities both in school and through the wider community. They relate well to adults and their peers. Pupils are self-confident and are developing as responsible members of the community. Social and cultural opportunities are many and varied and include a number of clubs; sporting fixtures; plays, concerts and productions; and opportunities for visits. Trips abroad play a part in the programme of developing pupils' confidence and social awareness.
25. Pupils are very aware of the multi-cultural society in which they live. In music lessons, pupils have explored aspects of world music. Dance lessons are linked to black history in Year 8, and pupils have looked at Islamic patterns in mathematics. An international event each year integrates these aspects, including the food, clothes and music of different countries. Pupils are very aware of the benefits that a multi-cultural society gives them. Many different ethnic groups are integrated well into the school, fostering good racial harmony.

## **Attendance**

26. Attendance is unsatisfactory and continues to be a problem in the main school, despite its best efforts. Very many pupils are happy to come to school and learn. However, there is a significant number of pupils whose level of attendance is poor. The school's attendance figures are below those of other schools nationally, because of small numbers of disaffected pupils who do not wish to attend; the many pupils whose parents take them on holiday in term time; pupils who have left but are still on the school's roll; and some instances of truancy condoned by parents.
27. A number of pupils have difficult home circumstances, which affect attendance levels and contribute to these low figures. The poor levels of attendance and missed lessons are having a considerable effect on some pupils' level of achievement. Where Year 11 pupils are missing substantial parts of the curriculum, this affects their examination results and in the past they have underachieved. The school is seeking to mentor this group more effectively this year.

28. Attendance in the sixth form is satisfactory and students are punctual to their lessons.

**Attendance in the latest complete reporting year 2003/4 (%)**

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	9.2	School data	1.7
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.*

29. Punctuality is generally satisfactory, with most pupils arriving promptly to school in the mornings and getting to their lessons on time. The inspection team judged the effectiveness of the morning registration time to be dependent upon individual tutors. Where the time is used productively, it provides a positive start to the day.
30. The school has tightened up procedures for dealing with absence and truancy. The appointment of an attendance officer, incentives to reward regular attendance and good tracking procedures have brought about some improvement this year. The staff are working closely with the educational social worker to monitor the situation and implement new response systems, including home visits and prosecutions for the worst offending individuals.

**Sixth form**

31. The mature attitudes, behaviour and personal qualities of the sixth form students have a significant and positive effect on their levels of achievement. Students enjoy being in the sixth form. They speak about the very good relationships that have been developed with their teachers. They feel they are generally respected and treated like adults and this encourages them to act accordingly. Their mature attitudes to learning help to promote a productive working environment and this in turn helps many of them to achieve well. The behaviour of students in the sixth form is very good. Students value and respect others and generally get on well together, although there are some tensions between Years 12 and 13. This is due in part to frustrations caused by timetabling difficulties, the shortage of working space and lack of resources to enable students to study effectively.
32. Sixth form students are developing into confident and independent young people and act as good role models to other pupils. They willingly offer their help and undertake their roles of responsibility conscientiously. Year 13 students are more involved in the life of the school than are those in Year 12, because they are older and more mature. Students are involved in Young Enterprise schemes, undertake peer teaching, act as peer mentors, reading partners to younger pupils with reading difficulties and generally offer a good service to the school. The student council is less active than in the past, but still runs a few social activities organising trips and fund-raising events.

**QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL**

The quality of education that the school provides is good. Links with parents, other schools and the community and the school's guidance, care and support for pupils are all strengths. They contribute to pupils' good standards of work. The teaching is good overall and most pupils learn well. The curriculum is satisfactory, except that the use of ICT in a number of subjects is underdeveloped. The school is aware of this and the need for improved provision is highlighted in the school improvement plan.

**Teaching and learning**

Good teaching ensures that pupils learn well in the large majority of lessons. Assessment is satisfactory.

## Main strengths and weaknesses

- Lessons are well planned, to a standard and effective format, with a good variety of activities to interest the pupils. They are told what they are to learn at the start of the lesson, so that they are clear about what is expected of them.
- Relationships are good, so that in almost all lessons pupils are willing to learn.
- Most teachers have high expectations of their pupils.
- In some lessons the pace of learning is too slow and the work lacks challenge.
- Homework is set but not monitored consistently well.

## Commentary

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 153 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
5 (3 %)	40 (26 %)	65 (43 %)	38 (25 %)	4 (2.5 %)	1 (0.5%)	0 (0%)

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

### Example of outstanding practice

#### **In an excellent physical education lesson, a Year 10 class learned about safety risks in sport and how to avoid injury.**

The teacher's planning and preparation had been excellent. She explained to the class what they were going to learn and gained the total attention of the class with an exciting ICT presentation. Pupils were invited to the front to circle risks that they identified in a cartoon of physical education activities projected onto the whiteboard. Then a varied, interesting series of slides and video clips held their attention as they identified and discussed, as a class, safety and safety equipment issues. Key words and spellings were emphasized, giving good support for literacy development. This was followed by varied group activities involving flash cards and decision making. The pace was brisk and the plenary session included the setting of homework tasks that developed their learning further. Throughout, the pupils were highly motivated, fully involved, working very hard and enjoying everything that they did.

33. Just over three quarters of the teaching observed in the school was good, very good or excellent. In most lessons, pupils are willing to learn and make good progress. Learning is good overall and characterised by pupils gaining confidence in their learning because good relationships are established by their teachers. They steadily acquire skills and knowledge, in response to teachers' effective planning and sequencing of activities. Teachers share lesson objectives with pupils so that they know what they are expected to achieve. Most lessons include a good range of teaching and learning strategies, so that at appropriate times the pupils are listening to the teacher, at others they are learning independently or in small groups. However, there is still a small minority of lessons which is unsatisfactory or poor. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour, as well as their achievement, suffer in these classes. In the few lessons concerned, teachers were unable to motivate pupils sufficiently to maintain good discipline and create a good working atmosphere.
34. The work that the school has done on developing teaching strategies has improved teaching since the last report. The Key Stage 3 strategy is being implemented well and all teachers make use of the underlying principles in their planning. The school has a clear 'house style' for the structure of lessons and the adoption of this by all teachers has helped to produce the consistency in the quality of teaching that is a feature of the school. In an English lesson for Year 10 GCSE pupils, for example, the pupils entered the classroom quietly and prepared to work, knowing the high expectations that the teacher had of them. They began by reading and writing down the aims of the lesson. The detailed lesson plan indicated a range of tasks

that the pupils would undertake, arranged in a sequence that enabled them to progressively learn the skills that they needed to reach the objectives that had been set. The tasks were short and varied, to keep their interest and concentration. They were designed to appeal to them – for example, one was a kind of bingo game – yet were directly relevant to their needs and the lesson objectives. As a result, the pupils learnt well and enjoyed the lesson.

35. Many very good and excellent lessons were observed. In these, the teachers used their subject expertise and their knowledge of examination requirements to give pupils very good, practical advice that helped them to attain and achieve well. Where teachers have high expectations, and this is matched with good use of examples and models of good work, the pupils have high aspirations and work hard to succeed. These lessons are planned to interest and motivate the pupils and they respond very well, showing interest and concentration. In a very good Year 9 music lesson, relationships were very positive. The teacher explained the tasks very clearly so that the pupils knew exactly what they had to do. Her expectations were very high, pupils had total confidence in her and wanted to succeed. She encouraged and supported them and her expectations were fulfilled – the series of short activities that she had planned gave them the knowledge and skills that they needed to produce short compositions that were melodic and to the set rhythm. They made very good progress.
36. Some teachers are adept at planning a range of tasks that will challenge all pupils. In some classes, however, the higher attaining pupils are insufficiently challenged or the lower attaining pupils are not given the support that they need. Some teachers need to make better use of the assessment information that they have to ensure that the lesson plans they use will take full account of the range of abilities and needs of all of their pupils.
37. Homework is set regularly in mathematics and the head of department has introduced strategies for checking that it is set and completed. In other subject areas, the amount of homework set is inconsistent. It is not regular enough and too little is done to ensure that it is completed. In science, for example, (although many other subjects could have been chosen as examples) there were many instances of incomplete work and unfinished assignments. The result of this is that pupils have a poor record of work from which to revise and are short of coursework for their GCSE examinations. The setting and completion of homework is not monitored rigorously enough. No effective policy is in place for dealing with pupils who regularly fail to complete it – either because they lack motivation or have not got the resources and facilities that they need at home. This was raised as a concern by a number of parents.
38. Teaching was found to be good overall in English, mathematics, geography, history, religious education and art. In French, teaching is good in Year 10 (there are no French classes in Year 11). It is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9, because teachers are struggling to cope with the short amount of time that the subject has on the timetable. In design and technology, teaching is good for Years 7 to 9, and satisfactory in Years 10 and 11, where there is a backlog of underachievement from years in which resources were inadequate. Teaching in ICT is very good for Years 7 to 9 and good for the older pupils. Teaching is very good in both music and physical education.
39. The teaching and learning of pupils with special educational needs are good. Teachers are aware of their needs and plan appropriately. In many subjects there is good preparation of resources to meet differing needs. Pupils learn well in lessons when they receive individual and small group support from learning support teachers or teaching assistants. They also receive very good additional support, especially in Years 7 and 8, for literacy - sometimes in groups especially withdrawn from lessons, and from reading partners during form time, or spelling clubs after school. Learning support teachers also give very good support, team teaching where teachers are inexperienced, or where there may be challenging behaviour.

### **Sixth form**

40. Teaching and learning are good overall. Lessons are always at least satisfactory and in most are good or very good. Teachers understand the limitations of their students very well and

adapt their teaching strategies to help them to learn. Learning is built up gradually, with regular reinforcement of what has been covered in previous lessons. Many of the strategies that are used in schools for teaching younger pupils are, quite rightly, used in sixth form lessons because of the high levels of support that many of these students need in order to make progress. This is often necessary, but does not always help students to become independent learners. Teachers use questioning to very good effect, to check on how much students are understanding, as well as to challenge them and make them think for themselves. Resources are used well to help students to learn. For example, in a very good physical education lesson on the theory of motor control, the teacher first revised with the students what they already knew and then led them on to the next level in progressive, easy to follow, steps. ICT was used very well to make the issues clear, including projected displays on to an interactive whiteboard to graphically illustrate the points that were being made. Discussion and questioning were used well to develop their thinking and involve them in their learning.

41. Students learn well because they have confidence in their teachers, relate to them well and feel supported and cared for, especially as many groups are very small and so students can get individual help. In a Year 12 health and social care lesson, the presentations that the students were working on – developing their ideas about the difference between formal and informal carers, had been negotiated with the teacher so that they were able to achieve at an appropriate level (some were more competent than others and the teacher had adapted the tasks to meet the needs of all students). Relationships were very good and the individual knowledge and care that the teacher showed for the students was a very positive feature. They were enthusiastic and worked hard. They were making good progress.
42. Teaching in the sixth form was found to be good in English, art, business studies and health and social care. It is very good physical education. Teaching is satisfactory in ICT and biology.

### **Assessment**

43. Assessment arrangements are satisfactory, overall. The school has a clear policy for assessing achievement. Whole school procedures are generally effective and ensure that teachers have the necessary information about pupils when they arrive in the school. The school also administers its own testing. Original data are supplemented by adding test, examination results and progress checks as these become available. Performances of boys and girls are monitored as are those of pupils from different ethnic groups. Most subject areas follow a whole school policy although this is not the case in design and technology and modern foreign languages. In these two departments there is a need to better inform students about their levels of performance and to bring assessment into line with whole school policy. Assessment procedures in music and physical education are very good. Where assessment is effective pupils have a clear understanding about their levels of performance and how to improve them. This occurs in a number of subject areas including English, mathematics, geography, music, physical education and art. Parents are well informed about their children's levels of effort in all subjects. In science, whilst pupils' recollection of factual data is monitored, assessment of their enquiry methods is not so strong.
44. Procedures for monitoring pupils' progress in subjects against national and local authority levels are good. Detailed data are collected and shared with staff and are updated when new statistics become available. Pupils are quickly tested after their arrival in Year 7. Pupils are involved in setting their own targets and departmental records are checked. Monitoring of actual GCSE results against predicted grades takes place. These procedures are, in most subjects, carefully used to identify targets for pupils.

### **The curriculum**



The curriculum is satisfactory throughout the school. It has a good focus on vocational courses in Years 10 and 11 and the sixth form. Resources are adequate and the accommodation satisfactory, except in design and technology and the sixth form. New accommodation is being built in preparation for September. Staffing is satisfactory overall, good in some subjects, but there are subject areas that do not have enough specialist teachers.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The provision for personal, social and health education and citizenship is good.
- Senior members of staff are open to innovative curriculum ideas to meet the needs of the pupils more fully.
- The innovative programmes motivate many of the pupils who take part.
- Pupils with special educational needs achieve well because of the good provision.
- There is an imbalance in the two-week timetable for some subjects. Timetabling in the sixth form is unsatisfactory.
- Access to ICT and its use is unsatisfactory in some subjects.
- The accommodation is unsatisfactory in some areas, although new accommodation is being built.
- The sixth form accommodation is inadequate.
- Staffing is more stable than in the past, but some areas lack sufficient specialists.

### **Commentary**

45. The curriculum for Years 7 to 11 meets the requirements of the National Curriculum and is satisfactory. A concern last year was the number of pupils in Year 11 who failed to take examinations and the ones who left with no qualifications, despite the appropriate focus on vocational courses in Years 10 and 11. Senior members of staff are looking at alternative courses for these pupils and a new curriculum is planned for 2006 to take account of the latest guidance for pupils aged 14 to 19. Lessons are planned to a two-week timetable to give flexibility, but in mathematics and music there is an imbalance across the two weeks. Some pupils, for example, get most of their mathematics teaching in one week and then very little in the next, which does not help them to remember what they have learnt. The time allocations for modern foreign languages and design and technology for some year groups are low and this is affecting the quality of learning and, therefore, standards in these subjects.
46. Members of the senior staff are open to new ideas when designing the curriculum. Two good examples of innovation are the pilot 'Skills Plus' programme for pupils in Year 7 and the 'Learning to Learn' course, which is part of the personal, social and health education programme. These new courses include modules on personal learning styles, literacy (particularly improving skills of writing), and performing arts. While it is too early to judge formally the impact of these programmes, early indications are favourable. However, pupils in Year 7 are given badges to denote their personal learning style and they sport them with pride. When asked what the badge means, most are eager to explain their style of learning (whether they learn best from pictures, for example, or from discussion) and appear to be proud of it. Many enjoyed the session when they came together to review what they had all learned in their different modules at the end of the first term. Most pupils in Year 10 who took part in work related courses at the local college stayed the course and some, including those previously disaffected, were motivated to stay on to further education. This opportunity is open to all and interest among the pupils is high, but more schools are now involved and the level of funding has led to fewer pupils from the school being able to access the courses. GNVQ intermediate business studies is a successful course on which many pupils are gaining good results.
47. All pupils have lessons in citizenship. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 follow a course, devised by the school, which leads to a GCSE short course examination in Year 11. This is effective. The majority of pupils know how to behave and know that they must be responsible for their actions. Keys to the success of the programme are the identification of appropriate and skilled staff to lead it and the time allowed to teach it as separate subject.

48. The provision for pupils with special educational needs is good. Pupils with special educational needs have good access to the curriculum through the quality of support provided, and special dispensations for national examinations. There is good additional support for literacy through reading partners, literacy withdrawal groups in Years 7 and 8, and spelling clubs. In Years 10 and 11 some pupils benefit from vocational courses, but at present there is not enough alternative accreditation for pupils for whom GCSE is inappropriate. The quality of support staff for pupils with special educational needs is very good. The quality of accommodation is welcoming, specialist rooms are good. The quality of resources for pupils is very good, including computers, spelling and literacy programmes, and a range of appropriate fiction and non-fiction.

### **Staffing, resources and accommodation**

49. The school has experienced difficulties with staffing the curriculum, which has had a negative effect on standards and achievement. While the situation is now improving, there is still a shortage of specialist teachers in mathematics, design and technology and geography (although the position is improving in geography).
50. In many curriculum areas, accommodation is adequate. It does not, however, allow for the staff in some subjects to work together and some areas have little space for storing materials. Much of the accommodation is tired and some areas do not present a business-like and modern environment for learning. The school is being extended to take account of increasing numbers. Building work was underway during the inspection and pupils coped with the problems of disruption, power cuts, loss of heating, and the mud underfoot very well indeed. The new accommodation will improve the unsatisfactory accommodation for design and technology, art, science and the sixth form. Accommodation for drama is unsatisfactory, because the one studio is small and poorly resourced. Access by departments to the ICT facilities, and therefore the use of ICT, are unsatisfactory in many departments. However, new ICT suites, which will be stocked with new computers, are being built.

### **Sixth form**

51. Until recently, the sixth form has catered for students who would not usually stay on into further or higher education and an appropriate curriculum has been provided. All students take religious education, physical education, ICT and a separately accredited course which focuses on the key skills of communication and numeracy (ASDAN). Four advanced level vocational courses (AVCE) are offered and A levels have been increased to six, with more planned to meet the changing intake. Most of the current students take a vocational course alongside a course at A level and many are successful in gaining the points needed for entry to the colleges of their choice. However, for some of the students, it is questionable whether the A level course is appropriate. They attain very low grades.
52. The head of the sixth form knows the students well and works hard to ensure that the courses they take are appropriate to their individual needs. For example, Urdu has been introduced. Students with a limited knowledge of Urdu when they start the course achieve highly, some gaining A grades at AS level. The school has recently been granted approval to start a vocational course in music and is planning to start another - in the performing arts.
53. Because of the need to adapt the timetable to match those of other schools in the consortium, many students face clashes on their timetables. This particularly affects lessons in business education and ICT, which are sometimes on at the same time. The head of the sixth form does her utmost to support these students by making herself and facilities available, but many students find the timetable inconvenient. Others complain about the balance of their timetables because they have the bulk of their lessons on one day, one after the other. These problems need to be tackled if the sixth form is to successfully attract more students.

54. Provision for personal, social and health education is good. Students are known well by their tutors and receive good personal support. They enjoy helping Year 7 pupils as assistant readers and the Year 7 pupils value having an older student work with them. One Year 13 student said that she wishes to work with children as a result of this. The small range of enrichment activities includes opportunities to engage in public speaking and helping fellow students to understand the dangers of taking drugs. A focus on deaths caused by speeding vehicles, supported by a workshop run by a theatre group, held the interest of all students in the sixth form.

### **Staffing, resources and accommodation in the sixth form**

55. Staffing in the sixth form is satisfactory and students value the guidance they receive from well-qualified staff. Resources are generally satisfactory, except that the access to computers is limited. Accommodation for the sixth form is unsatisfactory. Students have few facilities for private study, although many choose to work in the library. Their recreation area is small and their classrooms are scattered around the school. Some of the rooms are too small.

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

This is a very caring school. Procedures to ensure pupils' health and safety, support and welfare are very effective. Systems to monitor and guide their personal and academic development are good. Induction arrangements for pupils new to the school in Year 7 and careers guidance are good and help support pupils as they move through the school. Pupils have positive views about the school and they feel they are consulted and that their views are taken into consideration.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The effective and sensitive pastoral system ensures pupils are well supported, and that there is an adult they can turn to if needed.
- The personal support processes provide focused care and assistance for individuals with behavioural or other personal difficulties.
- Pupils receive good guidance as they move through the school, which enables them to make well-informed choices.
- Pupils say the school listens to them and values their views.
- Sixth form students value the support and advice received as a result of the good rapport established with their teachers, form tutors and the head of the sixth form.
- The Year 12 students feel they were not given sufficient guidance to prepare them for life in the sixth form.
- Opportunities to consult with students and involve them in decision-making processes are underdeveloped.
- The quality of personal support and guidance for sixth form students' is sound.

### **Commentary**

56. Parents are very complimentary about the school and feel it treats pupils fairly. Pupils generally have very positive views about their school and the care, support and guidance they receive. They value the friendly atmosphere, the teachers and their relationships with them, the range of extra-curricular clubs, activities and trips, and the whole learning environment. The pupil questionnaires indicated some concerns regarding behaviour and bullying. However, most pupils spoken to felt that this was not a major concern and that any problems are dealt with quickly and effectively. Pupils feel they are well consulted. The members of the new school council – 'Re: Action Group' – are very enthusiastic, acting as a '*can do*' group of pupils who '*want to make a difference*'. They have used funds generated through renting out lockers to purchase new display cabinets in the reception hall because they '*are proud of success... and want the trophies to be seen*'. The pupils feel that their views are being taken into consideration and they have an opportunity to be part of decision-making processes in the school.

57. The school has a very inclusive stance towards the care of pupils. The well-structured pastoral system, provided by form tutors, heads of year and senior staff, provides stability and support as pupils move through the school. It ensures that there is an adult who knows them and can provide help and guidance when needed. Specialist advice, counselling and additional support are provided effectively, through the school nurse, Connexions advisers, the youth services and other outside agencies. These help those who may be having difficulties as well as contributing to their well-rounded development. Procedures to monitor and support pupils' academic and personal development are well developed. In individual mentoring sessions, form tutors discuss pupils' progress and negotiate targets. This ensures that pupils know how they are doing and what they need to do to improve. The induction arrangements, buddy system and support for new pupils are very effective in enabling them to settle into school quickly. This level of care is continued with information readily available to help them make important decisions at key points such as course options at the end of Year 9. Careers advice is very well developed through the citizenship programme and is supplemented well by the good resources in the careers library and by the Connexions advisers. The personal, social and health education programme equips pupils well with the knowledge and understanding to make informed choices in their life.
58. Arrangements for child protection and addressing the needs of looked after children are very well developed. The school carefully monitors these pupils and sensitively intervenes where necessary to ensure they receive the help they require. A fast track system brings together staff and representatives from various support agencies each week to consider how vulnerable pupils can be best supported. The school is rigorous in its approach to health and safety; particularly in view of the building works and potential dangers this poses. The school and governing body take their responsibilities for health, safety and security seriously in order to ensure a safe environment for learning. Any problems are dealt with immediately.
59. The quality of support, advice and guidance for pupils with special educational needs is very good. Pupils' individual education plans contain specific and manageable targets for literacy, numeracy, behaviour and learning that are regularly reviewed and adjusted. All subjects contribute to them and pupils understand their targets and how to improve. The early identification of pupils' special educational needs on entry to the school through tests and teacher recommendation is good. The Learning Support team are approachable and pupils are given and ask for very good individual counselling on personal problems, relationships with other pupils, learning difficulties. This is helped by accommodation that is welcoming, and with opportunities for privacy when necessary, so that pupils feel secure in asking for help. The special educational needs co-ordinator makes very good use of records and regularly tracks pupils' progress.

### **Sixth form**

60. The quality of personal support and guidance for students is sound. Students generally are happy at school and have positive views about the sixth form. This is a very inclusive sixth form, giving overseas students opportunities to pursue their education and Year 14 students the chance to stay on and re-do course work, in order to improve their grades. Few students received and completed the pre-inspection questionnaire. However, inspectors spoke to many of them during the inspection week. It was evident from these discussions that there are differing opinions among students in the sixth form about the quality of their provision. Year 13 students are very satisfied with the courses on offer and their sixth form experience. However, students in Year 12 are less happy. The proposed sixth form consortium arrangement has led to serious timetabling problems for some Year 12 students. Some are unhappy with the restrictions on their choice of subjects, and some are dissatisfied with the imbalances in their lesson schedule (with some very busy days and others with large numbers of free periods) that have resulted from the joint arrangements. In addition, students have nowhere to study and limited access to computers.

61. Year 12 students explained that this year they did not have an introduction to the sixth form – (a Year 11 into Year 12 day) - and feel that they were not suitably prepared for what it would be like. It is apparent that a number of students were not prepared to become more independent learners. The older students spoke positively about the ways that they have been helped and encouraged to work and study independently. They value the fact that teachers are always there if they have a problem or encounter difficulties with their work. They value the good rapport and mature relationships established with their teachers and feel they are consulted and listened to by their immediate tutors. Younger students still seek the security of very regular contact with teachers and find it difficult to motivate and organise themselves to work without staff present. However, both groups of students feel that communications with senior management staff could be improved. They feel they are not listened to and that the issues they have raised have not been dealt with well. The inspection found that senior members of staff have not succeeded in addressing all the needs of the students: some of the problems that the school has faced have not been explained clearly to them.
62. Regular academic mentoring and support from tutors ensures that students are aware of how they are doing and what they need to do to improve. Arrangements are satisfactory. Students applying for university receive intensive help with their applications forms and careers advisers are available to guide those who are uncertain about their futures.

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

The partnerships with parents and partner institutions are good overall. Links with the local community are very well fostered and make a significant contribution to pupils' enrichment and education experience.

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

- The good links with partner institutions helps promote pupils' progress and provide varied opportunities especially for sports.
- Very good community links enrich pupils' educational experience and have raised the profile of the school in the community.
- Too many parents are not supporting their children's education by ensuring they attend school regularly.
- The good links with parents are continued into the sixth form to keep them fully involved in their children's education.
- Effective links are being developed with partner schools to offer broader opportunities for students.

#### **Commentary**

63. Improvements over the last few years have led to many more parents choosing to send their children to Mandeville School, which has become very popular in the area and is now over-subscribed. Parents have generally positive views about the school and the education it gives their children. The school seeks to foster effective relationships with parents and involve them in their children's education, and this is having a positive effect on pupils' learning and achievement. However, there is a significant number of parents who do not get involved and do not value education sufficiently to ensure that their children attend regularly.
64. The school keeps parents fully updated and informed about activities and key events through regular newsletters and reports on their child's progress through the school. Home-school links are maintained effectively by the tutorial staff through pupil planners, and parents are contacted when there are problems and when their child has done well. Parents are consulted and their views are sought through school questionnaires. Parents are advised about the progress of their children through interim reports, consultation and review meetings. The annual reports are of good quality and clearly indicate what has been covered, provide

information about progress and propose targets for improvement. Parents of pupils with special education needs are kept suitably informed about their progress and are invited to be involved in the review processes.

65. The school has been very active in developing strong links with many local community groups, sporting organisations, nursing homes and businesses. This helps provide enrichment opportunities for pupils and enhances the reputation of the school. The effectiveness of this is very evident in the positive letters of support received from the community for the recent bid for sports college status. The school is very active in Aylesbury working closely with other schools in both music and sporting events. Pupils perform at concerts, in church and around the town. Concerts, dance and theatre performances and sporting activities are well supported and raise the profile of the school. Businesses links have contributed to staff development opportunities through various consultants and mentoring schemes; curriculum initiatives through BT; many work experience placements; and sponsorship deals such as the recent musical instruments provided by Tesco. The school has developed effective links with Aylesbury College and makes use of their vocational courses and resources to help facilitate the work-related programmes. There are also very useful links with the many feeder primary schools through a good range of opportunities for primary schools to use Mandeville's sporting and other facilities. Well-structured liaison helps to ensure the smooth transition of pupils into Year 7.
66. Liaison and communication with the parents and carers of pupils with special educational needs is very good. Parents and carers are fully involved in the process for providing statements of special educational need and attend annual reviews. Communication with parents and carers over individual education plans is very good and they are consulted and involved in pupils' behaviour targets. The special educational needs co-ordinator is easily accessible to parents and carers. They are given very good advice and are referred to other agencies as appropriate, for example the educational psychologist or medical and social services. Links with primary schools are good so that pupils are well supported on entry. Liaison with other agencies such as the speech and language service, welfare services and children in care are very good.

### **Sixth form**

67. Parents are very happy with the sixth form provision for students. They welcome the good communication with staff, the regular updates on progress and the fact that they are kept fully apprised of any problems or concerns. They are also very much in favour of the school encouraging students to attend after school study periods for those falling behind in their work.
68. Links with the community are satisfactory. No opportunities are provided for community service and only small numbers of students in Year 12 are involved in Young Enterprise schemes. Work experience opportunities are integral to the health and social care course and are optional for other students through the education business partnership. Collaborative links with the nearby schools are in the early stage of development, but the intention is that they will expand the range of course options for students in future. Students have opportunities to undertake junior sports leader awards and this has promoted effective links with primary schools. Programmes of visits and links with universities and colleges are well-established and help pupils to identify and progress onto the next step in their career development.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

The leadership and management of the school are satisfactory, with very good leadership from the headteacher and senior team.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The leadership of the school has a clear vision for the future of the school and makes effective use of appropriate strategies, including good use of external consultants.

- Improvements initiated have led to rapid progress in recent years.
- The performance of the school is monitored very rigorously at a senior level and the information is used to raise standards.
- There is good leadership and management of the pastoral team and of some subject departments, but not yet of all.
- The governing body monitors the work of the school effectively and is clear about its strengths and weaknesses.
- All statutory requirements are met.

### **Commentary**

69. The headteacher and his senior team have introduced a number of significant and beneficial changes to the school since it was put into special measures for failing to provide a satisfactory standard of education. There has been a major initiative to improve teaching and learning across the school, for example. The strategic planning and implementation of this has been impressive. Rigorous monitoring of lessons was introduced; teaching champions established (gifted practitioners who can inspire and support their colleagues); wide use of external consultants to advise within departments; and a very effective in-house training base established. The school has been keen to learn from the best practice elsewhere and throughout the inspection teachers were eager to listen to advice about new ideas and approaches. There has been considerable improvement, as the quality of teaching section of this report recognizes. Teaching is now a strength of the school, despite the many very real problems that the school has had with the recruitment and retention of staff.
70. The ethos of the school is good – pupils are interested and willing to learn because teachers are enthusiastic about their subjects and almost all classrooms present a positive climate for learning. This stems to a great extent from the positive and enthusiastic dedication to the school and the importance of learning shown by the senior team. They have recognized the need to broaden the education that the school offers and, although there is still room for further development, have extended the curriculum significantly despite problems with staffing, and with buildings that are not entirely suited to a modern curriculum. Good developments include GCSE short courses in citizenship and religious studies for all and increased vocational courses.
71. The senior team is small in number but very effective. Raising standards has been their first priority. They share the same vision of a school that is dedicated to providing the best possible education for all, irrespective of pupils' prior attainment or social circumstance. The senior team is reflective, self-critical and innovative, as their approaches to improving teaching and learning have shown. They have been enterprising in their initiatives to appoint new staff and have, in very many cases, selected very well. They have shown that they can handle a crisis situation with alacrity and wisdom, as shown by their effective response to a crisis in staffing in religious education. Provision is now good. Elsewhere they have shown that they can anticipate potential problems and take pre-emptive action. The school welcomed the inspection as an opportunity to show its strengths and develop further. It is a school with ambition. It has a high reputation in the local area and this is not easy to achieve for a non-selective school in an area where there is selection at the age of 11. It has grown rapidly in popularity under the existing leadership, more than doubling in size in recent years.
72. Leadership and management overall are satisfactory. Year heads are very well managed and give very good direction to their teams of form tutors, although the monitoring of homework by form tutors lacks rigour. Many middle managers in charge of departments are giving good (in some cases very good) leadership and manage their areas well. They monitor work very thoroughly, monitor and evaluate teaching regularly and use the information they gain to improve the overall provision. They have a good grasp of the significance of examination and tests results, learn from their analyses about weaknesses in pupils' learning and develop provision accordingly. However, there other subjects that are not led as well, generally because they are managed by temporary or part-time staff. Some heads of department are

newly in place and are still establishing themselves. The staffing problems that the school has faced have had an effect at middle management level, partly because the structure results in a very high proportion of teachers having management responsibilities. The rationalization of this and the professional development of middle managers are now priorities for the school, as the senior team has recognised. There are enough very good practitioners already on the staff for much of this development to be managed within the school.

73. The leadership and management of the learning support team are very good and classroom assistants are very effectively deployed. The training and professional development of assistants to meet students' identified needs is very good. Communication between the special educational needs co-ordinator and subject departments, and support for teachers who are inexperienced teachers with classes where there can be challenging behaviour, are very good. Learning support has a high profile, is readily available, and makes an important contribution to the school's inclusion policy.
74. Commitment to inclusion is strong. In order to meet the needs of all pupils, including the relatively high proportion of low attainers, the curriculum in Years 10 and 11 has been developed to provide a good range of appropriate courses. The language support department is led well and provides effectively for the pupils for whom English is an additional language. Their progress is carefully monitored and those at an early stage of learning English receive good support. This is a clear improvement since the previous report. All the criticisms made then have been taken seriously and good leadership and management have brought about changes that have improved the provision significantly, including good one-to-one support for new arrivals from abroad and the provision of dual language dictionaries.
75. The governing body makes an effective contribution to the work of the school and all statutory requirements are met. All governors are linked to curriculum areas and many visit regularly to monitor and support the school. Many of them have professional expertise outside education that they bring to their role for the benefit of the school. They take their role seriously and are effective as critical friends of the school, questioning and testing in a number of areas, such as performance in national tests and finance. They have a secure understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses.
76. The administrative and clerical staff and the classroom assistants are deployed effectively and support the teachers well to ensure that they can concentrate on their primary roles. The caretaking and cleaning staff work well to ensure that the school buildings and grounds are clean, tidy and attractive.

### **Leadership and management of the sixth form**

77. Leadership and management of the sixth form are satisfactory. The head of the sixth form has worked hard to cater for the abilities of the students who stay on, and has been highly successful in motivating students who would not normally go on to further or higher education. Her priority is to expand the sixth form and senior management staff are supporting her in encouraging students with a wider range of ability to enter after Year 11.
78. The head of the sixth form has limited time for the role as she has many responsibilities. She therefore has to rely on informal management systems to monitor the quality of teaching and learning, the impact of the curriculum, and the training of tutors for their role. As a result, she is unable to gain a clear overview of the provision. As the sixth form is small, this has been less of a problem as the informal methods work satisfactorily. However, some problems, such as unsatisfactory timetabling have not been resolved. As the sixth form grows, formal systems will be necessary to ensure that the provision is of a higher quality. The school is looking to appoint a deputy head of sixth form to provide additional management support.



## Financial information

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

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	3,312,982.00	Balance from previous year	-350,085.00
Total expenditure	3,248,840.00	Balance carried forward to the next	-285,942.00
Expenditure per pupil	3223.00		

79. Despite the large deficit, which has accrued over a number of years, the management of the school's finances is now good. All the necessary controls are in place, and the school has received a favourable audit report. The reasons for the large deficit were explained in the last report. As the school had grown rapidly, the necessary funding had lagged behind the need to recruit staff and purchase additional resources. A recovery programme is in place, agreed with the local authority, and there is a steady reduction each year in the level of deficit. The budget is now on course to be in balance. Special educational needs funding and all additional funding are spent very appropriately. The principles of best value are applied well. Income and expenditure per student is above the national average, partly because of the additional costs of running a specialist college. However, students achieve well in terms of both academic and personal development, and therefore the school is providing satisfactory value for money.
80. The sixth form is cost effective. Despite its small size, it is not being subsidised from the budget for the main school. It gives satisfactory value for money, partly because of its valuable contribution to the ethos of the school and to the opportunities in the immediate area for low attaining students to continue their education beyond the age of 16.

## WORK-RELATED LEARNING

Provision for work-related learning (WRL) is **satisfactory** and statutory requirements are met.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- A good range of GNVQ courses is provided but flexible learning opportunities involving work placements and college links are limited.
- There is a work-related learning element for all in the citizenship course.
- Careers education and guidance are good and work experience is managed well.
- Local business and the community contribute well by providing placements and other support.
- The school's vision of work related learning is developing, but responsibility for it is not clearly defined.

### Commentary

81. Pupils benefit from work placements, business links and links with local colleges and schools. All Year 10 pupils have a fortnight of work experience and individuals can take up further placements if the traditional curriculum does not meet their needs. Provision is well managed by the school and the local education business partnership ensures that health and safety requirements are met. Students in the sixth form say that they found their placements really valuable. Year 10 pupils are confident that their planned placements will be beneficial because they are matched to their planned careers or training courses.
82. The school has an increased flexibility programme for some pupils in Years 10 and 11.

College links enable some pupils who find it hard to cope with school to continue studying through a full range of GCSE and GNVQ courses. Pupils acquire a range of skills and vocational qualifications. However this programme is available to relatively few pupils and it is evident that others would benefit from extended vocational opportunities. Intermediate GNVQ courses in four vocational areas, including business and health and social care, are open to all pupils through the option system and many pupils follow two or more GNVQ courses. Progression routes onto advanced courses post-16 are clear and some pupils begin work on higher-level qualifications in Year 11.

83. Some subjects, including citizenship and business studies make a valuable contribution to work-related learning, but the potential for contribution from other subject areas has not been explored. An audit has yet to be completed. Careers education is being taught in designated tutor sessions and there is a valuable WRL element on employment issues in the GCSE citizenship course, followed by all pupils. Careers and further education guidance is good because of the quality of support from Connexions and good management within the school. Some pupils work toward the Youth Award and this has a valuable work related and careers element. Business challenge days and closer links with individual companies are now being planned and Young Enterprise is well established in Year 12.
84. By Year 11, pupils are able to talk about skills for work with confidence and, when questioned, they understand the importance of being able to communicate well and work as part of a team. Year 10 pupils have some understanding of health and safety at work, because they are already preparing for work experience. Individuals are very clear about the importance of training or higher education and those questioned were confident about their choice of college or employment. Pupils have been very successful on college courses, for example in motor vehicle maintenance, and have been offered apprenticeships with local companies.
85. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Links between the school and the community are used well and the school has a clear understanding of the potential for vocational and work related learning. An enterprise consultant has helped the school to identify gaps in provision and indicated valuable areas for development. A number of members of staff are involved in aspects of WRL, but no individual within the school is taking overall responsibility for co-ordination.

## **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**

- Pupils' achievement is good, although standards are well below average, especially in writing.
- The department is effectively led and managed and the head of department is supported well by a team of teachers committed to high standards.
- The quality of teaching is good overall with examples of exemplary practice, but there is inconsistency across the large team.
- High quality marking, leading to targets for each pupil, is raising standards.
- The departmental development plan is focused on appropriate priorities.
- Monitoring the work of the department is at an early stage, because the head of department is newly appointed.
- Access to, and use of, ICT are unsatisfactory.

##### **Commentary**

86. The department has progressed well since the last inspection. There have been significant improvements in teaching, particularly in the matching of tasks to pupils' abilities and in the subject guidance for all teachers in the department. Staffing is now stable, after a period of turbulence which affected standards in 2004.
87. In 2002 and 2003, students achieved very well at the end of Year 9. Standards in comparison with all schools were well below average. Locally, higher attaining pupils go to grammar schools, so far more students enter with poor skills of literacy than in most schools. In 2004 GCSE results in both English and in English literature plummeted. This was because of changes of staff and poor attendance by a significant number of students. Standards in English literature have been better than those in English and this was true in 2004. Pupils appear to have achieved satisfactorily at the end of Year 9, although the data to confirm this judgment have not been validated.
88. This year, the department is achieving higher standards across the board. The reasons for this are good guidance from senior management and effective leadership from the newly appointed head of department. In every lesson, teachers focus on how pupils can obtain the highest possible standards. Each pupil knows the level or grade they are expected to attain and almost all know how to improve their work to achieve it. At some point in nearly every lesson, the teachers point to the criteria for a level or grade to remind pupils. The other factor in the department's increasing success is thorough planning of lessons. This helps the teachers who are inexperienced or whose subject knowledge has gaps. Subject guidance is coming together well, although not yet complete for all year groups. Attainment is currently well below average at the end of Year 9 and Year 11, chiefly because of poor writing skills, but pupils achieve well.
89. More able pupils achieve well because they are challenged by the work and by the questions put by teachers. Exceptionally able pupils are identified and given challenging work. In a Year 11 lesson, several of these pupils achieved very well because the work they were doing was motivating and open-ended. They enjoyed the tussle of debate with their peers and the teacher. The gender gap in performance is closing and, in most lessons, boys are motivated by the choice of text and also by male role models in the department. In some lessons, boys

and girls are encouraged to sit together, but in many classes boys and girls sit apart. In the small sample of lessons observed, where they sat in mixed gender groups, boys and girls achieved equally well. In lessons where they sat in gender groups and teaching was less motivating, boys lost interest and started to chat idly. Pupils who are only recently acquiring English do well in most lessons and attain creditable results in examinations. In some of the lower sets, there is little understanding of the different needs of pupils with special educational needs and those who speak English as an additional language. Pupils with special educational needs are supported well by the class teachers and the special educational needs co-ordinator and her team of classroom assistants.

90. Standards are well below average in writing. The head of department has instigated approaches to encourage a love of reading and to improve writing. Higher attaining pupils are capable of some good writing.
91. These pupils read with insight and become more confident to manipulate language in their writing as they move from Year 9 to Year 11. They discuss their ideas with maturity, speaking fluently and choosing words carefully. For many pupils, language is difficult, especially reading between the lines of texts and expressing their ideas carefully. However, most of these pupils make good progress so they learn how to take account of the context of texts and to think about how authors convey their ideas. Expressing these ideas in writing is a challenge for many, which is why standards are lower in writing than in reading and speaking and listening. This is a focus of the department's work. Pupils are encouraged to use ICT for their homework to produce the final draft and to research. There are no computers in the classrooms for pupils to draft their writing: greater use of ICT would support the improvement of writing.
92. Overall the quality of teaching and learning is good. The national strategy for Years 7 to 9 has supported the department well. In addition to the features above, much of the teaching has high expectations, so pupils know where they stand. Teaching often focuses on helping pupils to acquire good skills of learning; for example, using highlighters to annotate texts and using large sheets of paper to construct charts. There is a significant number of volatile pupils, but teachers remain calm and relationships are good, which helps to maintain the effective learning environment. A key strength is the way in which teachers use assessment to focus pupils' attention on improvement of their work. Each piece of work is given a national curriculum level or GCSE grade and an appropriate target is set.
93. Large numbers of teachers teach English and there is some inconsistency in their approaches that the newly appointed head of department is tackling. In a small number of lessons, pupils are not encouraged to expand their ideas orally, so they neither develop their skills of language nor their learning. Management of behaviour is not strong in a few lessons, so time is lost in settling classes. Changes of activities were slow in a few lessons, so pupils, especially boys, lost interest. Even where teaching was good, the poor quality of overhead transparencies and dull, badly photocopied resources did not fully support the learning.
94. In the exemplary practice, the teaching was lively and enthusiastic, stimulating each pupil to want to take part and encouraging them to develop a love of literature. Not a second was wasted and the range of interesting activities built on previous understanding. A strong focus was placed on informing pupils of how to achieve higher performance. Above all, the lessons were fun, so all thoroughly enjoyed them and the time sped by.
95. The head of department has made a good start, supported by a school and local education authority review of the department. She has used these well to formulate the department development plan, which is focused on the right priorities. She has left regular monitoring of practice till later, although she has observed most teachers, as there have been more immediate priorities, such as encouraging the department to focus on teaching and learning at their meetings. This is helping to build consistency across the department. She has a very

clear view of where the department should be and knows how to achieve her vision. The hard working and committed team of teachers supports her well.

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

96. The school has been working on raising standards of literacy through a common approach to teaching literacy skills and the national strategy for raising standards in Years 9 to 11, but overall literacy skills are still well below average – especially writing skills. A programme where reading assistants support pupils in Year 7 who have difficulty with reading is popular and is raising the standards of reading for the pupils taking part. Some departments are tackling pupils' difficulties with literacy well. The mathematics and religious education departments support skills of writing by using writing frames, a written structure that pupils use as a guide. Most departments teach key words of their subjects and some ensure that these are spelled correctly. Most departments ensure that pupils understand what they are reading. Literacy is inconsistency across departments in teaching the skills of literacy that are needed for their subjects. There is still more to do before pupils are making as much progress as they capable of, but the school's approaches so far have been satisfactory.

### **Modern foreign languages**

Provision in modern foreign languages is **unsatisfactory** but improving.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Students in Years 7 to 9 are making unsatisfactory progress overall.
- The time allocation in Years 7 to 9 is inadequate.
- Assessment is ineffective.
- The head of department's clear vision, well supported by senior managers, is bringing improvements.
- Pupils' attitudes to the subject are almost always positive.

### **Commentary**

97. No pupils have been entered for GCSE examinations in French for the past two years. Teacher assessments for pupils at the end of Year 9 show that standards have been very low. Work seen during the inspection shows that there has been some improvement. Overall, standards in Years 7 to 9 are well below average. However, there are examples of pupils achieving standards that are close to average. In one Year 8 class, for example, pupils wrote accurately and at length to express and justify opinions. In most lessons, however, pupils do not produce enough extended writing. They do not have enough opportunities to develop listening and reading skills due to lack of curriculum time. There are no pupils taking French in Year 11. Standards in Year 10 are below average, but pupils are achieving well because of the quality of the teaching.
98. Overall pupils make unsatisfactory progress in Years 7 to 9. The reasons for this are partly historic: the staffing problems, which have only recently been resolved, and the time allocation, which is inadequate. Some pupils make good progress. Below average pupils in Year 9, for example, are able to write at length about healthy eating, giving reasons for their choice of particular foods. However, progress is inconsistent, reflecting the staffing problems that existed until recently. Some pupils spend too much time copying vocabulary rather than developing their writing skills. In general, pupils do not have enough curriculum time to develop all four language skills effectively and to consolidate vocabulary. In many lessons, high attaining pupils are not being challenged. On the other hand, pupils with special educational needs and those for whom English is not their home language are well supported in lessons. Progress is, once again, limited because of the inadequate time allocation. This is particularly the case for pupils with special educational needs, who find it difficult to retain vocabulary from one lesson to the next. Pupils do not develop ICT skills effectively. Progress

in Year 10 is good. Pupils improve their range of vocabulary and structure and learn to add variety to their writing.

99. One of the strong features of lessons seen was the good behaviour and positive attitudes shown by pupils. They concentrate well and join in lessons often with enthusiasm. Their exercise books are almost always well-presented.
100. Learning has been unsatisfactory over time. The work in books from past years shows that pupils have done insufficient work and the pace of their learning has been slow. There have been staffing problems, because there were insufficient qualified teachers, and there was a shortage of time for French on the timetable. However, in lessons seen during the inspection, teaching and learning were satisfactory overall, with examples of good and very good teaching – the result of the recent improvements in staffing. Teaching is very good in Year 10. Teachers plan their lessons well with clear objectives, good starter activities and effective reviews of learning at the end. There is generally a clear focus to all lessons. Pupils are positive about the subject, because teachers always create a good working atmosphere in lessons. Pupils with special needs are clearly identified and teachers work hard to involve them in lessons. They receive effective help from learning support assistants. However, there is often a lack of challenge in lessons for high attaining pupils. Teachers do not always make their expectations clear when setting individual pieces of work and do not use the French language enough. In general, teaching methods are appropriate and effective. Presentation of new vocabulary is often lively and well supported by the use of the interactive whiteboard. In the best lessons there is good variety of activity. Sometimes, teaching methods are inappropriate (for example when grammar is taught out of context). In addition to French, Urdu is offered as an option in Year 10. In the lesson seen the small number of pupils worked enthusiastically, responding well to very good teaching.
101. Teachers are clear about pupils' progress in the short-term, because they review learning effectively at the end of lessons. However, they do not set long-term targets for pupils and assessment of their work is neither regular nor systematic. As a result, they do not monitor progress effectively and find it difficult to identify and remedy underachievement. In general, pupils do not have a clear idea of what they have achieved and what they need to do to improve because teachers do not spend enough time explaining National Curriculum levels and GCSE criteria, though there is some evidence of good practice. The marking of pupils' work is regular and encouraging, but teachers rarely show pupils how to improve.
102. Leadership and management are good from the head of department, but satisfactory overall when the impact of whole-school decisions is taken into account, that have left the department with too little teaching time. This was done to counter a shortage of French teachers. The unsatisfactory provision has been brought about from factors beyond the new head of department's control and she is bringing about improvements. The head of department provides a good role model, has a clear vision about the way forward and receives good support from senior managers. The department has faced serious recruitment problems since the last inspection and has worked hard to resolve them, with limited success until recently. The department now has a core of experienced staff. As a result there has been an improvement in the quality of teaching and French has been re-introduced as a GCSE subject. However, inadequate curricular time, which was identified at the last inspection as a major factor inhibiting progress, has not been addressed. This means that progress since the last inspection is unsatisfactory. The department does not use the information it has about pupils to set targets so that its progress can be effectively evaluated. However, systems for the monitoring and evaluation of teaching are very rigorous.

## **MATHEMATICS**

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Results in Year 9 national tests are rising at a faster rate than nationally.
- Consistently good teaching is planned well to challenge and support pupils.
- Assessment is referenced to either National Curriculum levels or GCSE grades.
- The positive attitude and behaviour of pupils are a strength.
- The department is embracing new technology to enhance teaching, but the presentation of some material needs improving.
- Homework is regularly set, but could be used to develop independent learning more and extend the more able pupils.
- The use of ICT by pupils in lessons is hampered by a lack of resources.

### **Commentary**

103. The standards of pupils when they enter the school are well below average. The 2004 results in the Year 9 national tests were below the national average for all schools. However, if pupils' prior attainment is taken into account, results represent good achievement. Results in mathematics were better than in English and science. The results are improving faster than nationally. The results for the 2004 GCSE examination in mathematics were well below the national average. Again, if the levels of attainment are compared to the standards achieved at the end of Year 9, achievement is good. Results in mathematics were slightly better than results in English language or science. The results in 2004 were lower than 2003. The reasons for this were unstable staffing and the poor attendance of pupils during their final year.
104. Standards seen during the inspection confirm these results and indicate a trend of improvement, especially in Years 7 to 9. Many pupils enter the school with lower than expected levels of attainment and the department has a successful programme of extra study to bring these pupils up to the expected levels. Pupils in Year 7, who were well below average when they entered the school, are now below average overall, but close to the levels expected of them, with some working above. They are numerate, confidently use fractions, round numbers, use basic algebraic notation and compile tally and frequency charts. They can use these charts to construct appropriate diagrams. These skills develop, so that, by the time they reach Year 9, higher attaining pupils have good levels of algebra skills and use these to solve a wide range of equations.
105. Only a few pupils are high or very high attaining in mathematics. A full range of GCSE levels is offered, but overall standards seen in the GCSE courses are lower than in many schools. Only a few pupils are following the higher-level course and the likelihood of very high grades is low. Work seen during the inspection confirms this. Attainment is below average. Most pupils follow the intermediate or foundation level courses with a determination to achieve the very best they can.
106. Pupils achieve well, because they arrive at lessons promptly, settle quickly and work hard during their lessons. They work well together and are confident to work on the board in front of the whole class without embarrassment. Their exercise books are tidy. Pupils who have special educational needs receive additional support in lessons and achieve as well as their peers. Pupils set their own targets after each assessment and these are challenging, realistic and achievable. There is no noticeable difference between the achievements of boys and girls, although there is some imbalance in different sets. Behaviour is good and well managed.
107. Grouping pupils by reference to their ability means that the attainment within each class is narrow. This helps teachers to plan effectively to meet pupils' needs. Lessons are very well prepared and contain a relevant range of activities that challenge and stimulate pupils to learn. When the interactive whiteboards are used, the quality of presentation is good, but other methods of presenting of material in lessons sometimes lack clarity. Most lessons have a paired or small group activity in them, this encourages pupils to work together and discuss their mathematics. This works well because it develops understanding and encourages pupils

to give reasons for their answers. Teachers often have additional work for pupils who finish the main task before others; using this strategy more consistently would provide better for gifted and talented pupils. Teachers set homework at regular intervals. This has not been true in the past, but now homework is set and marked regularly. Homework generally consists of further practice of work done in class: there is little development of independent study. Marking indicates either the National Curriculum level or the probable GCSE grade of each piece of homework. This enables pupils to have a sound knowledge of their individual levels of attainment and helps them to set their own targets for improvement.

108. Leadership and management of mathematics are good. Staffing has now stabilised and consequently the head of department can concentrate on developing mathematics rather than planning and organising work for temporary teachers. There has been good monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning. This, combined with the sharing of good practice, has enabled teachers to develop a range of effective strategies to enhance learning. The shortage of teachers means that in Year 7 the lower attaining pupils are in larger groups than is desirable. Assessment is regular and planned within the scheme of work. The department has developed methods of tracking pupils' progress, so that pupils can receive extra help as necessary. Accommodation is adequate for the delivery of the curriculum, but two rooms are small. This limits the range of activities that teachers can use. No textbooks are provided. This means that they have to make their own notes on topics and they do not have a reference book to use at home. Not enough computers are available for pupils to use during lessons. Since the previous inspection in 2003 improvement has been satisfactory. Teaching has improved and as a result, there has been a rise in results at the end of Year 9. This is a hard-working, mutually supportive department with the capacity to improve further.

### **Mathematics across the curriculum**

109. Pupils' number skills are adequate for their needs in the whole curriculum. The National Numeracy Strategy is in place with regular reinforcement of mental skills in mathematics lessons, frequent number-based starter activities and regular mental arithmetic. There has been some whole school training, although not all departments have a numeracy policy in their documentation. The mathematics department has undertaken some cross-curricular work on graphical skills, producing guidelines to assist other teachers. This provides effective support and guidance. In science and geography, for example, pupils draw and interpret graphs at appropriate levels and the opportunities to apply number skills feature in many lessons. In ICT lessons, pupils use spreadsheets to analyse information.

## **SCIENCE**

Provision in science is **satisfactory**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- More able pupils in Years 10 and 11 achieve well, but some less able pupils do not achieve enough because they do not complete their work.
- Most lessons are well structured and scientific vocabulary is strongly emphasised; relationships are good and most pupils are keen to learn.
- Scientific enquiry skills are not taught systematically. Some less able pupils do not pay enough attention to recording results and conclusions and evaluating them.
- There are not enough laboratories, technical support and use of ICT and these weaknesses have affected standards.
- Standards in national tests are analysed to underpin an action plan, but monitoring and self-review are not embedded in the department's practice.

### **Commentary**



110. In 2004, standards in Year 9 national tests were well below the national average and below that of schools with similar attainment on entry to Year 7. The results represent a dip compared to previous years, when there was a clear rising trend, although the school almost met its target for 2004. Some pupils were entered for the higher tier examination inappropriately in 2004 and this had an adverse effect on the results. At GCSE, standards also dipped compared to previous years: they were well below the average for non-selective schools in selective local education authorities. Taking account of their standards in Year 9, two years previously, pupils' achievements were below average. The department has acted to reverse the decline; there have been significant changes to staff and the department has stopped rotating classes between different teachers for each module of work in Years 10 and 11. The current deployment of two specialist teachers per class for double award GCSE is proving much more effective.
111. Standards in Year 9 remain well below average but are improved compared to last year. Overall pupils' achievements are satisfactory but their knowledge and understanding of key scientific facts and principles are better developed than their enquiry skills. The curriculum, planned around a national scheme, is used well by teachers to build on pupils' knowledge and understanding from year to year. However, less attention is given to ensuring pupils' scientific enquiry skills are developed as systematically. While pupils undertake a reasonable amount of practical work in lessons, many average and lower attaining pupils do not complete their work. They do not, for example, consider the evidence they have gathered, draw valid conclusions from it and suggest where improvements could be made to their working methods. Teachers draw attention to these weaknesses when marking pupils' work, but too many pupils are not acting on the advice given. In addition, the development of pupils' practical skills has been hampered by other factors. There are too few laboratories to support the number of classes in each year and there has been too little technician support. ICT is not used enough to aid pupils' research and to gather and present data, because there has been little access to appropriate resources until very recently. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well throughout the school, particularly when they are supported by the well trained and effective learning support assistants.
112. In Years 10 and 11, standards are rising, especially in Year 11 where they are below average. Overall, achievement is satisfactory. The more able pupils achieve well and a considerably larger proportion is likely to attain high grades at GCSE than was the case last year. The setting arrangements are effective in ensuring these pupils are appropriately challenged and they are taught well by knowledgeable and committed teachers, especially in biology. For example, more able pupils in Year 11 achieved well and enjoyed researching features of inherited diseases. They used their knowledge of genetics to explain how the diseases are passed on to subsequent generations during a very well structured lesson. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported and also make good progress. However, a significant minority of less able pupils are not achieving enough because they do not complete work that has been set, both within lessons and through homework. Sometimes this is because work is too demanding and is not matched well to their needs and abilities.
113. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall: a good proportion is good but a little is unsatisfactory. Most lessons are well structured to achieve a balance of class discussion and group or individual tasks. Starter activities are effective in helping pupils to apply what they have learned from previous lessons and teachers' good subject knowledge is reflected in teachers' clear explanations and good questioning. The acquisition of new scientific vocabulary features strongly. Relationships are good in most lessons; pupils of all ethnic backgrounds work well together on shared tasks and most are keen to do well. However, in some weaker and unsatisfactory lessons, there is too much inattention and chatter that slows the pace of learning as the teacher seeks to address it. Pupils are not monitored closely as they work so that those who are struggling make little progress. Marking is regular, but most comments tend to focus on the amount of effort that pupils are making, rather than on what they need to learn in order to improve.

114. Satisfactory progress has been made since the last inspection. Standards have risen, especially in Year 11. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The head of science and second in charge have evaluated patterns in performance in national tests. The priorities in the department's action plan are soundly based, although there is not enough focus on strategies for improving and monitoring teaching quality. A useful database of assessments is held centrally and targets are set for all pupils. While these are monitored periodically, actions to address potential underachievement are not yet systematic or embedded in the department's practice.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)**

Provision in ICT is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The curriculum has improved significantly since the last inspection and statutory requirements are now met.
- Achievement in Years 7 to 9 is now very good and standards are average.
- Teaching in Years 7 to 9 is very good overall and good in examination classes.
- Resources have improved significantly, but there are still some inadequate computers in use in some areas of the school.

### **Commentary**

115. Examination results in the GNVQ course improved over the previous year but were well below average and completion rates for those who started the course were low. In the advanced vocational course in 2003, three quarters of those entered passed the examination. Although results were below average, achievement was good for many pupils. In 2004, there were no pass grades achieved by the very small number of candidates. There were significant staffing difficulties in the department, which have now been resolved.
116. Pupils now have timetabled ICT lessons from Years 7 to 10 and many in Year 11 follow an ICT course. In Year 7 standards are below average on entry but, because of more stable staffing and very good teaching, pupils' achievement is now very good and standards have improved significantly. Although there is a wide range of ability, standards in Years 7 to 9 are generally consistent with national expectations. By Year 9, most pupils are competent users of a range of essential software. In Years 10 and 11, many pupils follow a GNVQ course and others follow a "core ICT" course. Because teaching in these years is good overall, and sometimes very good, pupils make up much of the deficit in skills, accumulated through lack of continuity in staffing in their earlier years. Teachers have good subject knowledge and use demonstration well to help pupils to understand how to master the skills they are teaching. As a result, pupils learn well. They pick up skills and knowledge quickly and retaining them because they have good opportunities to revise and practise what they have learned. Standards are below average, but achievement is good and pupils are generally confident, enabling them to transfer skills to different tasks and to other subjects. Pupils with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language all make good progress and so achieve well. Because of appropriate planning and effective teaching, National Curriculum requirements are covered in Years 7 to 11. This is largely in the separately taught ICT lessons, but there are also contributions from other departments.
117. Crucial to the improvements in teaching and standards in ICT courses are the level and quality of ICT resources, which have improved significantly in the last few years. The programme of renewal continues, although there are still inadequacies to match the level of resourcing usually found in a school of this size. In addition, some machines are old, slow and very limited in the software which they can use, which detracts from the teaching and learning in some ICT rooms. Effective technical support ensures that the system is reliable, despite the limitations. There is a growing number of interactive whiteboards. These are

having a significant, positive impact on teaching and learning, where they are available, but there is scope for greater use of the boards by pupils to involve them more actively in ICT lessons. In all years, pupils are well informed about their progress and what they need to do to improve further - although in Years 7 to 9 there should be more awareness, among pupils, of National Curriculum levels and learning objectives were not always reviewed at the end of lessons.

118. The day-to-day management is good and leadership is satisfactory. Monitoring and assessment are now more rigorous in the examination courses from Year 10 to 13 to meet the demanding standards of the vocational examination courses. Hard lessons have been learnt from the inadequate monitoring of examination coursework in the past and more effective procedures are now in place. Improvement since the last inspection is good.

### **The use of ICT across the curriculum**

119. The use of ICT across the curriculum is satisfactory, although there are some weak areas where subject departments have made insufficient progress to incorporate ICT into schemes of work.
120. There are now more opportunities for subject departments to use ICT to enhance teaching and learning, because of the increase in the quality and quantity of ICT resources. In addition, because of the development of the discrete ICT curriculum, all pupils from Years 7 to 11 have ICT lessons in which to develop their ICT competence and the skills they learn can be used by other departments – though not all are able to do so because of a lack of access to equipment. The use of ICT to enhance teaching and learning is satisfactory overall. Use in the physical education department is very good. Particularly good use is made of a wide range of ICT applications in the GCSE and advanced level physical education courses. Pupils display very good levels of competence in using digital video and still cameras to analyse movement and strategies. Pupils use ICT very effectively for fitness monitoring, and staff use interactive whiteboards to very good effect in all aspects of classroom work.
121. Good use is made of ICT in business studies, although the poor quality of some hardware and software prevents it from being better. It is also good in religious education and the special educational needs department. It is satisfactory in many other departments but the use of ICT to enhance teaching and learning in English, geography, and art is underdeveloped. A low level of ICT use of in Years 7 to 9 is a weaker area of the design and technology curriculum and there is little use of ICT to enhance teaching and learning in citizenship provision. Some old machines, with limited capacity, are having an adverse effect on the use of ICT for teaching and learning, particularly in post-16 courses, notably business study, where students are not able to use the most appropriate software or easily transfer files to and from other parts of the computer network. Improvement in the use of ICT across the curriculum is satisfactory.

## **HUMANITIES**

### **Geography**

Provision in geography is **good**.

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

- Teaching is good and is adapted to meet the needs of all pupils.
- Pupils' good attitudes help them to learn.
- There are still underdeveloped skills in extended writing.
- Good leadership and management of the subject are raising standards.
- Opportunities for pupils to use ICT in geography are inadequate.

### **Commentary**

122. Pupils enter the school with well below average levels of attainment overall, although some pupils display better levels of geographical knowledge and skills. By the end of Year 9, standards are still below, but closer to, the national average, with 63 per cent of pupils attaining level 5 or better in 2004. Although attainment is below average, achievement is good in Years 7 to 9.
123. The gains in knowledge and understanding that have been made earlier are consolidated in Years 10 and 11. In Year 11 in 2004, 20 per cent of pupils gained a grade C or better compared to a national average of 57.5 per cent. Attainment was well below the national average. However, the ability profile of the students entered for the examination was such that three quarters of them gained grades that were in line with or above those indicated by predictive data, even though the year group suffered as a result of frequent changes of teachers. Analysis of pupils' work and on-going assessment during the inspection confirms that the prediction of 45 per cent C grades or better in 2005 is both realistically based and achievable. Currently, therefore, attainment in Year 11 is below average, but pupils are achieving well.
124. The performance of boys is slightly better than that of girls, against the national trend, and pupils from ethnic minorities achieve just as well as their peers.
125. Teaching and learning are good overall. All teaching observed during the inspection was good or very good in both Years 7 to 9 and in Years 10 and 11. Teaching was most successful when pupils were quickly engaged through imaginative starter activities that encouraged pupils to be active in their approach to learning. All teachers have high expectations of what pupils can achieve and they communicate these expectations to pupils effectively through words and actions designed to raise self-esteem and to reward positive attitudes. Pupils respond well to teaching, especially in completing collaborative learning tasks. These discussions are conducted enthusiastically and with increasingly well-developed skills in both speaking and listening. Many pupils have weak literacy skills and have difficulty in translating their verbally expressed ideas into written form. Teachers provide writing frames and structured tasks, but further strategies are required to enable pupils to progress by in small steps to gain skills in extended writing. In addition, pupils in Years 10 and 11 do not use geographical terms with sufficient precision. However, the productive discussions that take place in group work have developed their good skills in sorting information, distinguishing fact from opinion and placing knowledge in the correct context.
126. Learning is monitored carefully by teachers in lessons and marking is carried out conscientiously, with a clear focus on encouragement and reward for effort. The department's marking code is not applied consistently however. Assessment is good, both in terms of determining the standards reached and in indicating what is required to reach the next level. Pupils are aware of the levels at which they are working and useful display work provides them with exemplars to help them to improve further. Key words are used frequently by teachers and are displayed in use in appropriate contexts. Pupils with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language do as well as other pupils, especially when supported by teaching assistants who work closely with teachers as very effective teams. Although some ICT work was seen in pupils' work, systematic use of ICT in lessons is inadequate. Some good work is done to help pupils develop their skills in numeracy, although the range of skills used is narrow. Homework is set and marked but it is not well monitored.
127. Leadership and management are good. The head of department is a good role model and the department has a consistent style of teaching with much sharing of good practice. Furthermore, the department has been well managed in recent times minimizing the damaging effects of rapid staff turnover and a shortage of subject specialists. Schemes of work offer a range of approaches to topics that are carefully chosen to engage and stimulate pupils. Lessons are planned thoughtfully and the good attitudes to learning displayed by the pupils are due in great part to this good planning and the consistency of approach. A good system for recording and tracking pupils' progress is being implemented, but needs further

development, especially in the use of assessment data and in the involvement of pupils in tracking their own progress.

128. The geography rooms are adequate although their dispersed distribution and the temporary nature of one limit the use of ICT as a support for teaching and learning. The department's resources have improved recently, but are still barely adequate, especially in terms of ICT equipment.
129. Progress since the last inspection has been good. Teaching and learning have improved and pupils' attitudes are now good.

## History

Provision in history is **good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- GCSE results have improved continuously over the past five years.
- Teachers deliver well-structured and paced lessons that challenge students.
- Assessment procedures and homework arrangements do not match the quality of other aspects of the teaching.

### Commentary

130. In 2004, while GCSE results were below the national average, 50 per cent of students attained grades A\*-C. Boys outperformed girls by a significant margin. In terms of relative performance, these results were amongst the strongest in the school and represent a significant rise, of 30 per cent, over the results obtained in the previous year. For the first time in recent records, one student reached the highest grade of A\*. In 2004, the attainment of students in teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 was below national expectations, but in line with students from similar schools.
131. Achievement is good in Years 7 to 9. Attainment is below the national average, but students arrive at the school with well below average skills in the subject. They are making good progress in lessons due to the focused teaching of basic skills. Students acquire an understanding of the major historical events and personalities they are studying, but many have difficulty in recalling information accurately. All students use sources to support their narratives but few develop references at length or produce the explanatory writing required to reach the higher levels. Whilst the majority of students learn to think through historical problems, many have weak listening skills and find difficulty in focusing on the issues under review. Small groups of students are easily distracted in lessons unless classroom management is tight. Most students depend on their teachers for progress and motivation. Students with special educational needs progress as well as others. Students who speak English in addition to their home language also achieve well.
132. Achievement is good in Years 10 and 11. Although attainment is below the national average, pupils have made good progress from their standards at the end of Year 9. They show increasing skills and confidence in writing at length and constructing coherent historical arguments. They evaluate and use sources of information more critically, and are beginning to explain how and why different historical interpretations have been produced. Most students find their greatest challenge in synthesising from a range of historical evidence and in developing the conceptual agility to make effective links. The increasing popularity of the subject at GCSE is reflected in the significant increase in Year 10 numbers. In the context of a larger than average class group, a minority of students is immature in approach and lacks focus in learning.
133. Overall, teaching is good. Learning objectives are shared with students at the start of every lesson and an attempt is made to finish with an evaluation of gains in learning. Planning is good. Lessons are well organised and offer a good level of challenge. Teachers work hard to maintain good behaviour and to develop students' commitment. By incorporating a range of activities, they cater for the needs of pupils with differing capabilities and learning styles.

Good quality resources are used to stimulate interest. In Years 10 and 11, a strong focus is placed on exam requirements, so that students know what they must do to achieve. Books are checked and marked regularly, however, students are given too few indicators for improvement and little is done to identify weaknesses in the grammar and sense of their writing. The lack of focus placed on homework in Years 7 to 9, means that opportunities are lost for students to develop skills in extended writing and independent enquiry.

134. Leadership and management of history are devolved to the head of humanities, who divides her time between three subject areas, and faces problems arising from serious disruptions to staffing. The humanities area, including history, has an above average quota of newly qualified teachers – several from overseas – who are coping with a new curriculum and getting to know school policies and new students for the first time. The lack of a specific subject leader for history means that the structure is not in place to maximise the process of raising standards and achievement in history, and the overall quality of leadership and management of the subject is satisfactory rather than good. Development planning focuses on the improved use of ICT, together with increased monitoring and training to bring about consistency in teaching styles, and improved student monitoring and assessment. Schemes of work provide sound direction and guidance to teachers. Procedures are in place for target setting, but inconsistencies in application mean that not all students are aware of how well they are doing in relation to national standards. There is both formal and informal monitoring of teaching and sharing of best practice through good working relationships. Training needs are recognised and met where possible.

### **Religious education**

Overall, provision in religious education is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Dynamic, creative teaching is leading to effective learning.
- The subject makes a very positive contribution to pupils' personal development.
- GCSE results, both for the short and full courses, are improving.
- There is insufficient formal assessment.
- Not enough use is made of homework.

### **Commentary**

135. Students enter the school with well below average standards in religious education and many have low literacy skills. They make good progress and, although their standards remain below the national average, they improve significantly. All groups of students achieve well during the first three years. There is substantial, good quality written work in many pupils' books. Higher attaining pupils produce mature and thoughtful work as, for instance, in their investigation into the nature of spirituality. Lower attaining pupils write briefly, but reflectively, on key human issues such as suffering and justice. Some have completed imaginative projects, such as creating board games, demonstrating their understanding of Christian and Muslim pilgrimages.
136. In 2004, results for the full course GCSE were well above the national average for the first time and pupils did better than in many other subjects. Short course results were below the national average but were a substantial improvement on the previous year. Achievement is good. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well because they are effectively supported with specifically designed teaching materials and individual help. Standards are rising overall in Years 10 and 11 and are closer to the national average, although still below. Pupils demonstrate an accurate understanding and appreciation of key elements of Christianity and Islam and are able to compare these two faiths.

137. The quality of teaching is good. The current team of temporary teachers is ably supported with well-devised lesson-plans which offer a wide variety of activities, pace and vitality. Pupils are managed effectively and generally behave well. They learn well because lessons engage their interest successfully. There is much good use made of lively materials, including music, drama, film, information technology and appreciation of religious artefacts. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are integrated into all lessons as they learn to understand, respect and appreciate the feelings, beliefs and customs of other people and to recognise injustice, right and wrong. Pupils' work is marked thoroughly, but as yet the department is not using the nationally agreed levels for assessment in religious education which would allow pupils to measure their progress against other subjects. Homework is set only sporadically, so pupils do not develop sufficient responsibility for their own learning.
138. Leadership and management are satisfactory overall. The department has suffered serious staff shortages in the recent past and is currently seeking to appoint a new subject leader. However the team of temporary teachers is managed effectively by the head of humanities, supported by independent consultants. Under their guidance, these new teachers are already a dynamic team. Many training opportunities are available to them and the work of the department is closely monitored. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory.

## **TECHNOLOGY**

### **Design and technology**

The provision in design and technology is **satisfactory**.

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

- Examination and test results need improvement.
- Help and guidance given to individual students in lessons are very good.
- The high turnover of staff has adversely affected standards and the curriculum.
- The commitment of staff to improve standards is good.

#### **Commentary**

139. Standards on entry to Year 7 are well below the national average - many pupils have not studied the subject before they enter the school. In 2004, standards at the end of Year 9 remained well below the national average with under half the pupils reaching the target national standard. As a result of improved schemes of work and the recent arrival of new teachers, standards in lessons have improved and are now below the national average, with pupils achieving well. Most pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress with extra help and guidance from teachers and learning assistants.
140. The quality of teaching and learning in Years 7 to 9 is good overall. Teaching methods are effective and lessons well planned. Assignments are based on a good range of materials – fabric, food, metal, plastic and wood. Teachers give very good help and guidance to pupils in practical activities. As a result, pupils' attitudes are positive and they are keen to learn. More opportunities to write about the work and learn technical vocabulary are needed. ICT is insufficiently used. The curriculum time allocated is below average. Continued application of the National Key Stage Three Strategy is needed to improve standards further.
141. A quarter of pupils take either graphic products or food technology in Years 10 and 11; they have not benefited from the recent improvements made to the scheme of work. As a result, in 2004, the GCSE results overall were very low compared with the national average. Pupils did best in food technology. Standards in lessons vary significantly and are well below average. Achievement is broadly satisfactory.



142. The quality of teaching and learning in Years 10 and 11 varies considerably, but is satisfactory overall. In the best lessons, pupils' interest is raised by good introductions to topics and demonstrations. When lessons are less successful, the aims are not clear, pupils are unsure about ways to improve and there are no plans for completing work on time - the main reasons why some coursework is never completed and pupils become disheartened. Not enough use is made of target grades to inform pupils about their progress.
143. The leadership and management provided by the recently appointed part-time head of the curriculum area are good. Improved schemes of work for Years 7 to 9 have been introduced. The high turnover of staff has adversely affected standards and the curriculum. This has inhibited progress and development. Teachers support each other well and are committed to improve standards. The previous inspection report made little mention of the subject but progress over the past five months has been good.

## **VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS**

### **Lessons in drama were sampled, but the subject was not inspected in depth.**

144. All pupils study **drama** in Years 7 to 9 and it is an examination option in Years 10 and 11. The success rate at GCSE has been good with a high number of A\* to C passes. In 2004, 74 per cent of students entered achieved A\* to C passes, but there was a high drop out rate and about 16 pupils were not put in for examination. A possible reason is that the department was staffed by temporary teachers for a period of time. This has had a continued effect this year. The department is now staffed by experienced teachers, but many of the pupils, particularly in Year 11, have negative attitudes towards the subject. Attainment is below average at the end of Years 9 and 11, but pupils' achievement is satisfactory and sometimes good.
145. The lessons observed were satisfactory overall. There are considerable strengths in the teaching. The planning is detailed and includes a range of activities geared to the different learning needs of the pupils. The aims of the lessons are clear and shared with pupils, so that they know what is expected of them. A particular strength is sharing the criteria for National Curriculum levels or GCSE grades with the pupils, so they know what they are aiming for and how they can achieve their predicted grade or level. This is supported by a useful display, charting the progression of skills and understanding from Year 7 to Year 9. The staff support one another well; in one example, one teacher played a character who was being bullied and pupils questioned her about her feelings. This held the interest of the class, some of whom asked perceptive and sensitive questions.
146. Weaker elements of the teaching are mainly to do with the management of the pupils' behaviour. Some classes take a long time to settle. Sometimes there are gaps between activities, which allow pupils to lose interest and start to chatter. Bringing them back to the task loses more time. At no stage are the pupils out of control, but enforcing discipline and the school's code of conduct takes time away from learning. Another factor is that pupils are not encouraged to extend their ideas when answering. The other pupils do not always listen, so the teacher naturally wants to move on. This impairs the development of skills of evaluation by the pupils and does not develop their skills of literacy.
147. The staff work well together and the handbook and subject guidance, that they are developing together, is a most useful document. The course for GCSE is well chosen, as it includes a portfolio that pupils can build up as they are following the course and it suits the abilities of pupils in the school. The development plan is well focused. The accommodation is unsatisfactory. One drama studio is inadequate for the numbers taking the subject and the hall is not always available. The studio has inadequate resources, such as black out and lighting.

## **Art and design**

Provision for art is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Long term staffing problems have required teachers to support another department, weakening the focus on standards in art.
- Teaching is good and often very good, leading to good learning and good achievement in lessons.
- Pupils have positive attitudes to work and generally behave well, supporting an enjoyable and industrious environment for learning.
- Leadership is very good, enabling the department to steer through an extremely difficult period.
- Accommodation and resources are unsatisfactory and storage is poor; the pressures created cause difficulties for teacher deployment.
- The subject does not make effective use of computers to explore digital imaging.

### **Commentary**

148. Attainment is below average at the end of Year 9 and average at the end of Year 11, with pupils achieving well throughout the school, despite the problems that the department faces. The number of pupils gaining higher grades A\*-C in the 2004 GCSE examination was well below national average. This, nonetheless, represents a significant rise from the poor results of the previous year. Those who took the GNVQ in art and design did much better and the number gaining the equivalent of four good GCSE grades was close to the national average. The GNVQ course has been dropped, but evidence from the inspection and department targets indicates a further significant rise in GCSE results in the future.
149. The department has struggled under extremely difficult conditions for several years, especially with the difficulties of recruitment and retention of staff. Art teachers have been required to support the design and technology department and this has weakened the focus on standards, with teachers from both departments teaching outside of their specialisms and accommodation being shared. The temporary head of department has worked hard and with vision to bring about the good improvement that is evident since the last inspection, despite the many problems that the department has faced. Her leadership and management are very good. As a result of her efforts, and those of the rest of the team, there are many indications in the work of the department that support her confidence that the improving trend will be sustained.
150. Teaching is good overall, and often very good in Years 10 and 11, resulting in good learning and good achievement in lessons, in particular in Years 10 and 11. The specialist teachers have a very good command of their subject and teach with enthusiasm and commitment to high standards. Relationships are generally good and pupils work hard and enjoy their lessons, learning how to manage tools and resources to explore different media and release their creative energy. They are positive towards work and generally behave well. Teachers encourage pupils towards independent learning from Year 7. The plenary evaluation sessions and demonstrations of art skills are managed particularly well, contributing to listening and speaking skills and boosting pupils' self-confidence and esteem.
151. Accommodation and resources are unsatisfactory and restrict the development of art work in several areas. Computers are outdated and have no art software loaded, thereby restricting the opportunities for pupils to explore the innovative field of digital art.

## Music

The provision for music is **very good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good teaching leads to very good achievement, especially in Years 7 to 9.
- The very good curricular leadership provides clear direction.
- The very good extra curricular provision gives plenty of opportunities for performing.
- The number of pupils who have instrumental or singing lessons is impressive.
- Not enough use is made of computers to enrich pupils' experiences in music in Years 7 to 9.

### Commentary

152. Standards in the GCSE examinations have been improving steadily for the past few years but remain well below average at the higher grades. This is also the case in 2004, but results have improved considerably. The number of pupils gaining an A\*-G grade in music has been broadly average for the past few years. The number of pupils opting for music in Year 10 is very high.
153. Teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 have also been improving and in 2004 were below average. Pupils enter the school with well below average standards in music particularly in performing and listening. They make very good progress in Years 7 to 9, especially in keyboard performance, so that standards in lessons are broadly average at the end of Year 9 and this represents very good achievement. There is a backlog of underachievement amongst older pupils, resulting from provision which in the past was not as strong as it is now. This is holding back the progress of Year 11 pupils, who are nevertheless catching up, as a result of the very good teaching, on the skills and knowledge that they need to succeed in the GCSE examination. In a Year 11 lesson, for example, pupils showed satisfactory knowledge of musical terms and could recognise different musical styles through both aural and visual stimuli. Standards are currently below average in Year 11, which represents satisfactory achievement from their low levels of attainment at the end of Year 9.
154. Overall, teaching and learning are very good. Teaching is consistently very good and often excellent. Lessons are well planned and move at a very good pace, with a variety of different activities to help motivate pupils and keep their interest. There are very clear expectations of the pupils, very good subject knowledge and enthusiastic teaching. Pupils are encouraged very well in lessons. Assessment is very good, with pupils given clear targets and guidance on how to improve their work. Pupils assess their own work and others', both aurally and in writing. Little use is made of computers in Years 7 to 9, but the department has plans to rectify the situation. Singing is underdeveloped in classroom work, as are regular opportunities to listen to music to help develop pupils' knowledge and understanding of instruments and musical styles. Pupils' attitudes in music are very good: they enjoy their lessons and work hard. They contribute well to discussion and listen respectfully to each other when performing.
155. Curricular leadership is very good, with a clear vision and a commitment to raising standards. The department is very well managed. Teachers are very experienced and work very well as a team. They are knowledgeable about teaching and how pupils learn. The department is actively involved in supporting the work of a number of schools both primary and secondary. Extra-curricular music is very good, with many performing opportunities made available. The department is well supported by a team of visiting music teachers who between them teach nearly 20 per cent of the school either in instrumental or singing lessons. A number of important community links helps to raise the profile of the department, including links with the Mayor and the Royal British Legion. Many visits to concerts and workshops both in and out of school help enrich the musical experiences of pupils. Year 11 pupils are involved in the National Arts Awards. Improvement has been very good since the last inspection with

standards rising, healthy numbers opting for music in Year 10 and high numbers of pupils involved in extra-curricular music. Accommodation and resources have also improved. The department makes an important contribution to the cultural and social life of the school.

## PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Provision in physical education is **very good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good leadership and management result in a very efficient department.
- Very good teaching helps pupils to raise their standards.
- Teachers have high expectations that inspire pupils to achieve well.
- Detailed assessment of coursework lets pupils know how well they are achieving.
- A good curriculum gives pupils a range of sporting experiences.

### Commentary

156. By the end of Year 9, standards are above average. Many pupils do not arrive at the school with particularly well developed skills, but the great majority of them improve rapidly and achieve well. Standards in gymnastics are good. Boys and girls have the ability to control their body weight on their arms and some good examples of partner work were seen. In a badminton lesson, both boys and girls and those with special educational needs made excellent progress. They had very good understanding of techniques and tactics and employed both to very good effect. In dance, boys and girls work very well and develop the ability to constructively appraise their own and that of others. Some very pleasing dance was seen, both curricular and extra-curricular activities.
157. Standards in practical work, by the end of Year 11, are above average and pupils achieve well. Boys have a good range of soccer skills. In a lesson observed, most were able to strike the ball across the goal from the wing and many were capable of heading it very effectively. Boys and girls have good hockey skills and, consequently, play the game well. Standards of trampolining are average. The GCSE course is increasingly popular and is recruiting well. Improvement in the number of good passes has, since 2001, been very significant. In 2003, results were above the national average for all schools. Teachers monitor pupils' work closely, mark it well and give continuous encouragement. Revision procedures are very well developed. Pupils understand the grades that their performances are likely to gain and know how to improve their work. Good use of ICT is evident in homework projects.
158. Teaching and learning are very good and occasionally excellent. The best lessons are extremely well prepared and proceed with very considerable pace and purpose. Pupils are highly involved and contribute really well, showing very good understanding about theoretical issues. Teachers use ICT very effectively. The great majority of pupils, boys and girls, answer oral questions with enthusiasm and perception and they also raise good questions. Pupils with special educational needs are very well integrated into lessons and, where necessary, they are supported. They achieve in line with all other pupils.
159. Leadership and management are both very good. The department is key in sports college initiatives and the head of department has clear plans for further developments. Teachers are pulling together and making a concerted effort to raise standards. Day-to-day running of the department is very efficient. Sports college links with feeder primary schools are now very good and are making a significant impact on the provision of physical education in these schools. Very good in-service training and sharing of subject expertise is taking place and primary teachers speak highly of these developments.

160. There have been many significant improvements since the previous inspection, particularly in the GCSE results. Extra-curricular provision is very good. Boys and girls get many opportunities to participate in competitive sports and many individuals and teams do well at district level.

## **BUSINESS GNVQ**

161. One lesson of GNVQ intermediate business studies was observed. Teaching was good and pupils benefited from opportunities to work in pairs and groups in preparing role-plays on customer care. Results have been good in this subject and its presence in the curriculum is a strength. Pupils achieve well and standards are close to the national average. It is led well and the provision is well planned and organised. However learning in the session observed was affected by some unsatisfactory behaviour and the absence of pupils who had key roles in the planned activities.

## **PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP**

Provision in citizenship is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Clearly defined opportunities are provided for all students to learn about citizenship; all students prepare for a short course GCSE in citizenship studies at the end of Year 11.
- The citizenship programme, implemented in September 2002, has been well designed to develop knowledge and understanding of the responsibilities, rights and duties of individuals.
- Lessons are very well planned and supported by a very good range of resources to enable creativity and progression for students of different abilities.
- The use of homework is not well developed.
- Students do not have enough information on how to improve of their work, especially at GCSE level.

### **Commentary**

162. Students are achieving well in Years 7 to 9, and satisfactorily in Years 10 to 11. Most students work well in lessons and are encouraged by their teachers to do their best. However, some students in Year 11 lack direction in the lead up to the GCSE and this was reflected in their recent mock examination results. Teachers feel that as a new subject, citizenship does not yet have the status it deserves with the older students, who are the first to be entered for the examination. Plans are now being made to help them to distinguish the GCSE citizenship course from the non-examinable personal, social and health education programme, which is taught at intervals during the same timetabled periods. Overall, students with special educational needs receive good support with staff well aware of their requirements, and they make the same rates of progress as others. Students who speak English in addition to their home language receive good support and achieve well.

163. Standards seen in Year 9 and in Year 11 were below national expectations. Students enter the school with well below average skills. They acquire a good understanding of current issues and the main political and social institutions that affect their lives. However, many have difficulty in recalling detailed information accurately, especially in writing. Listening skills are below average, but once new ideas are grasped students think for themselves and show the ability to reflect on issues. The majority communicates their own values and beliefs freely in class and reach informed decisions. Their contributions are characterised by a respect for different cultural traditions and an understanding of a wide range of relationships. The need for co-operation and responsibility in accepting their rights and duties as members of wider communities is well understood.

164. Teaching is good overall, based on very good planning, and leads to pupils learning well. The best teaching seen was characterised by secure specialist knowledge, well-paced delivery and excellent classroom management techniques. This led to pupils showing interest in their work, concentrating well and participating enthusiastically in class discussions. Overall, teaching offers a good level of challenge and is underpinned by very good learning materials, which provide variety and structure learning experiences very effectively. At the start of every lesson, learning objectives are shared with students, and starter activities link to or check previous knowledge. As a result, pupils retain information well and build well on their previous knowledge. Teaching is matched to lesson content and takes account of preferred learning styles and levels of understanding of different groups of students to encourage high levels of participation. Teachers encourage students to explore controversial and sensitive issues and ensure that responses are balanced. Overall, students find significant interest in the subject and relations among students and teachers are good. The use of assessment and homework is less effective. Lack of regular homework, and especially of work that includes extended writing and is not just a continuation of incomplete class exercises, means that opportunities are lost to enhance independent learning skills. Assessment celebrates student achievement, but students are not given enough guidance on how to improve their work. In Years 10 and 11, not enough focus is placed on examination requirements and many students lack awareness of what they must do to achieve well.
165. Leadership and management are good. The co-ordinator has demonstrated that she possesses both the skills and vision required to lead the implementation of citizenship education in the school and the potential for further improvement is good. Recognising the importance of training for teachers to improve their subject knowledge and delivery, she identifies external courses and runs in-school sessions herself. The citizenship programme is reviewed annually, and action plans are produced. Appropriate priorities are being set for the future. The head of department has amassed a range of very good resources to support teaching and learning. To ensure parity of delivery in a department consisting of ten teachers drawn from different subject areas, she monitors lessons regularly, audits books and tracks student progress.
166. The programme she has designed develops a sense of social and moral responsibility and empowers the pupils to play an active role in a democratic society when they leave school. Steps are also being taken to involve students in the assessment process. Target setting is in place and students' good achievement in citizenship in, and beyond school is recognised and celebrated. Credit is given for active participation in school and community life, and students are regularly involved in charity fund raising.
167. Parents and community members are used to support the citizenship curriculum. They are kept well informed about the development of this new course through newsletters and through participation in citizenship activities. A recent survey commissioned by the school demonstrates that parents perceive the academic performance in citizenship to be the strongest in the school.

## SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM

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

The tables below show entry and performance information for courses completed in 2003.

### Level 3 GCE AS level courses (Year 12)

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Biology	1	100.0	65.2	0.0	11.1	20.0	20.6
Other languages	4	100.0	82.6	0.0	42.9	35.0	36.2
Total	5	100.0	73.9	0.0	17.4	32.0	25.7

### Level 3 GCE A level and VCE courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Business studies	10	60.0	60.5	40.0	14.6	60.0	60.1
Health and social care	4	100.0	67.7	25.0	14.5	60.0	63.5
Information technology	11	45.5	77.9	0.0	23.4	25.5	64.9
Travel and tourism	1	100.0	71.8	0.0	14.5	80.0	62.2
Total	26	61.5	n/a	19.2	n/a	46.2	85.5

## ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

**English literature was inspected and reported on in detail.** Urdu is also taught and lessons in Urdu were sampled. The teaching of Urdu is very good and students achieve very well.

### ENGLISH

Provision in English literature is **satisfactory**.

- Standards, although below average, are improving.
- Despite disruption in 2004, good teaching and learning are now leading to good achievement.
- Students would benefit from wider opportunities for enrichment.
- Across the sixth form curriculum, low levels of literacy are adversely affecting standards.

#### Commentary

168. Standards in English are below average. The first year in which the school entered students for AS level English literature was 2004. Results were well below average, with no students attaining the highest grades and nearly one third of those completing the course receiving no grade. Standards seen are better. Although in Year 12 attainment is very low - students' self-expression and use of literary terms is weak and their knowledge and understanding of literature and its historical context are narrow – students make good progress and achieve well from a low starting point. By Year 13 students have progressed considerably. Attainment is below average and improving. All show a clear engagement with the texts they are studying and are writing more coherently and with greater ambition. The writing of higher attaining students is well-structured, contains clear analysis of language and is well supported by close

references. Lower attaining students are writing in greater detail and beginning to support their ideas well. Sometimes their use of language is still imprecise or inappropriate, and borrowed ideas are repeated uncritically. Because of the clear progress over time the achievement of current students is good. There are no marked differences in achievement between boys and girls or different ethnic groups.

169. Teaching and learning are good with some very good aspects. Teachers insist that students express themselves clearly and use appropriate terminology. Students respond by quickly learning the technical expressions that they need to succeed in English examinations and they concentrate well and co-operate effectively to develop their reasoning and discussion skills, becoming increasingly articulate. Their teachers provide very good notes on the background and context of literature studied and they have high expectations that students will read more widely and research independently. Consequently, the students work hard to reach the standards that teachers expect of them and build up the cultural knowledge base that they need. For example, Year 13 students reading poetry by Keats could explain the references to Greek mythology. Lessons are well planned with good variation of tasks and groupings to ensure the students' active involvement. Learning objectives are clearly explained and related closely to the examination assessment criteria. Teachers' marking is detailed and gives helpful guidance on how to improve. Teachers also provide additional support beyond lessons, for example to a student retaking an AS level module.
170. Changes of teachers disrupted some of the learning last year but the appointment of a new head of English has already brought improvements. Leadership and management are good. There are now consistent approaches from a team of well qualified and experienced teachers. However, because of their relatively limited previous knowledge and understanding of literary history and tradition, students would benefit from wider opportunities for enrichment such as theatre visits and lectures and seminars with other sixth form students.

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

171. Language and literacy skills are below average. Many students have difficulty expressing themselves clearly and succinctly, and this restricts access to higher grades in examinations. In business studies, for example, only the highest attaining students structure essays well. In English, lower attaining students have weak analytical and critical skills.
172. The school recognises that literacy is a barrier to raising standards in the sixth form and, as in the main school, some subject areas are tackling the problem more actively and successfully than others. Support for literacy is evident in English literature and in business studies. A key skills course is providing additional help, but more needs to be done across the curriculum.

## **SCIENCE**

### **Biology**

Provision in biology is **satisfactory**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Uneven attendance by some students is resulting in gaps in their knowledge, despite the efforts of their teacher to resolve these.
- Imaginative activities engage students in thinking and discussing key ideas in lessons, although some lack the confidence to express what they know.
- Teaching is enthusiastic and knowledgeable; explanations are clear and accurate.
- Current timetable arrangements do not make for effective use of the available time.
- Not enough has been done at an early stage to ensure students have the knowledge and skills to meet the course demands.



## Commentary

173. The course was offered for the first time from September 2004. Currently six students are taking Year 12 modules. Their attainment on entry was low; some did not achieve a pass at grade C in GCSE science. Standards seen during the inspection were well below average. In relation to students' attainment on entry their achievements are satisfactory; but even the most able are currently working at the lower pass grade standard and some are below it.
174. Most students are keen to succeed and enjoy the course. Their understanding of some basic concepts such as the actions of enzymes and factors that affect their efficiency has improved substantially since they last studied them at GCSE. Current work on genetics and features of the replication of DNA show most students have a reasonable grasp of the processes involved, key terms and notations. Students take part in imaginative activities, such as the good use of recent research papers about genetic mutations in human ancestry to learn about gene replication and to explain evolutionary reasons for the differences between the incidence of mutations in humans and in animals. Students have good access to ICT to help them research and so extend their learning outside lessons. However, attendance by some students is a cause for concern. On occasion, half may be missing from a lesson. The class teacher regularly adapts lesson plans to revise and help fill in gaps in individual students' knowledge to enable them to move on. Even so, the overall effect is to slow down progress. Not enough has been done at an early stage to assess students' suitability for the course demands and their commitment to it.
175. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. The teacher's good subject knowledge is evident in the clarity of explanations and accurate use of key vocabulary. Lessons are stimulating and the teacher's enthusiasm for the subject sets a very positive climate in lessons. Imaginative activities are used to engage students' in learning for themselves. For example, they use cards to assemble an explanation of DNA replication and the key terms that describe steps in the process. Important points are regularly revised to help students assimilate them. Even so, some students lack confidence in responding to questions and providing explanations. Students keep their own notes and annotate information sheets provided by their teacher, but some of their files are not well ordered to aid their use. Students all have challenging targets and are regularly assessed using past examination questions. They feel well informed of their standards and what they need to do to improve. A few weaker students have relatively poor literacy skills and this limits the quality of their written and spoken answers.
176. The subject leader is showing satisfactory leadership and management in setting up the course, planning the teaching scheme and ensuring resources are in place, despite not yet having adequate finances for it. However, current timetable arrangements are not conducive to effective learning; students have three successive lessons on one day and two on another. They find it difficult to sustain concentration throughout these sessions and to use the time effectively as a result. The wider community is not yet used to enrich students' experiences although the course is still at an early stage of implementation.

## INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

177. **ICT** was not a focus for the inspection, but lessons were sampled. Standards in the latest GNVQ ICT examination improved, but were well below average. In the advanced VCE ICT course lessons observed, there was a wide range of standards in evidence. They are below the national average overall, but achievement is good for the majority of students. Teaching in sixth form lessons is satisfactory, but poor timetabling arrangements have had an adverse effect upon sixth form provision, in the use of staff time and in the efficient use of resources in the ICT and business department.

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

178. **Art** is provided in the sixth form and was sampled. Standards are below national averages. Evidence from the inspection shows good teaching and learning and some high achievement by higher attaining students. They are well motivated and enjoy exploring different media, but no separate area is provided in which students can work.

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

### **Physical education**

Provision in sixth form physical education is **very good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- An improved curriculum gives students a range of opportunities.
- Very good monitoring of coursework helps students to improve.
- Very good use of ICT enables students to access information.

### **Commentary**

179. Standards of work on AS and A2 level courses are average and students' achievement is good. Advanced level courses only started in 2003, initially with very small numbers of students. The very much improved results at GCSE are leading to larger sixth form groups, and with equal numbers of boys and girls. Two students who completed the AS level course in 2004 gained levels that reflect good achievement. In summer 2005, 12 pupils are taking the examination. Larger groups are taking the community sports leadership award on which the emphasis is communication skills. In observed lessons students were facing up to the challenges of communicating tasks, working well and being supportive of each other.

180. Teaching is very good and lessons proceed with pace and purpose, leading to students learning very well. Most lessons have exemplary preparation. Teachers have high expectations and ensure that students are made to think about topics and express opinions. They respond by working hard, sustaining concentration, and are highly motivated. Students' coursework files indicate that work is conducted at appropriate standards for AS and A2 level courses. Teachers use ICT to very good effect in lessons. Students' written coursework also reflects their abilities to utilise ICT for both presentation and for access to information. Work is thoroughly marked and helps students to improve their standards. Most students have a clear understanding of the grades which they are predicted to achieve in examinations and about how they can improve their work.

181. The leadership and management of the courses are very good. Teachers work very well together as a team and employ a wide range of teaching styles so that students are challenged and motivated. The work of the department is monitored well and an effective action plan gives good guidance for future improvement. Opportunities for physical education are now available for all sixth form students.

## **BUSINESS**

### **Business studies**

Provision in business studies is **satisfactory**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Students achieve well because teaching is good.
- Timetable clashes and the unsatisfactory attendance record of some students are adversely affecting learning.

- Management of the department is good but there is a need to increase links with local business.
- Effective use of computers and the trend for many students to take more than one AVCE course are helping to raise standards.

### **Commentary**

182. The advanced vocational course (AVCE) is provided and was inspected. Results in 2003 and 2004 were at the national average. This represents very good achievement because attainment on entry was well below the national average. In 2004 only one student passed. However most candidates have stayed on and are on schedule to complete the double entry course this year. In Year 13, standards are below average. However, standards on entry are low. Some students have not completed their GNVQ Intermediate and gain this qualification in Year 12. Overall, students achieve well and many improve on their target grades.
183. There are more male students overall, but no clear differences in achievement between boys and girls. Individually, female students achieve well. The learning of some students is affected by poor attendance and retention rates are average rather than good. The subject does not usually recruit many of the highest attaining students, but attitudes to the subject are positive. Most students respond well to the practical elements of the course and to the challenge of working independently. Support for students who have special needs or who are using English as an additional language is good and they progress well. The emphasis on key skills is particularly valuable in promoting good achievement for lower attaining students. Many students take more than one AVCE course and this is helping them to develop a good range of vocational skills.
184. Most students adapt well to the demands of the advanced course because teaching is good. The consistent reference to applications of learning supports those who encounter problems and encourages independent learning. Group activities and peer tutoring and assessment are used effectively to help students gain confidence and extend their knowledge. Computer resources are used very well and students show real confidence in using them for research and presentations. Students make good use of their part-time employment and links with local retailers to compare different businesses and produce business plans. Some students have benefited from visits to London to the Institute of Directors and the department is aware of the need to provide more of this type of opportunity. Teachers are skilled at questioning and they encourage students to think for themselves. They have appropriate experience in business and use this to provide good examples about marketing and customer care. Assignments show that average students have a secure understanding of business theory and of the examination board criteria. Students are given clear guidance about strategies for improvement. Learning is satisfactory. The timetable and availability of rooms do not allow students to have enough lessons with their teachers. Individual students have problems with literacy, attendance and lack of motivation. The department has tried hard to overcome these problems because it has very high expectations of its students and wants them to succeed, but learning is clearly affected and the low literacy levels of some students demotivates them because it is such a struggle for them to succeed in written work.
185. The department is managed well and leadership is satisfactory. Teachers work as a team and the management of resources and assessment is good. Team teaching provides very good support for independent learning but the department is having to devote too much of its energy and resources in compensating for the fact that students are not receiving as much direct teaching as they should be. The head of business studies also leads the ICT department and is responsible for the sixth form; this is a heavy burden of responsibility and leaves little time for formal monitoring, data analysis or developmental planning. AVCE Business was not reported on at the time of last inspection.

## HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

Provision in health and social care is **satisfactory**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching and learning help students to make good progress.
- The course encourages students to access higher education and careers in health and social care.
- There is a good availability of work related learning opportunities.
- Teachers have relevant vocational experience.
- Monitoring and target setting to assist the progress of individuals are undeveloped.
- Resources, including ICT provision, are inadequate.

### Commentary

186. The advanced vocational (AVCE) course was reintroduced three years ago to provide students with the opportunity to progress into health and social care careers and courses at higher education. It is proving popular, as shown by the increasing numbers enrolling each year and students report that it has raised their aspirations for further study and improved their career prospects.
187. In 2004 there were no entries for final accreditation. In 2003, the average performance of four students was slightly below the national average. Students were working at standards below the national average in lessons and work seen during the inspection. Students start the course in Year 12 with below average attainment and the results they obtained at end of Year 12 in the externally set unit tests indicated that they were making good progress and achieving well. Teachers provide effective support for those students with English as an additional language and they are making very good progress.
188. Teaching and learning are good. Students are encouraged to work productively in groups and are also able to carry out independent study and research. Their attitude and behaviour are good and they have a positive relationship with their teachers, all of which creates an effective climate for learning. They know the levels they are working at and how to improve. Teachers know their students and their progress well and offer praise and encouragement for them to succeed. They encourage students to engage in work-related learning by assisting them to find placements at local hospitals and care centres.
189. The overall leadership and management are satisfactory. The teachers are well qualified in health and social care and update their knowledge by undertaking annual work placements. They use this relevant vocational knowledge effectively to enrich the curriculum. The current systems to monitor and evaluate student performance rely too heavily on informal structures and relationships. The process for formative assessment and individual target setting to ensure the progress of all students is being developed. There is a lack of up-to-date resources and access to ICT in the area where the subject is based, which limits research and independent learning. Health and social care was not reported on in the last inspection.

## PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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

The leadership of other key staff	4	4
The effectiveness of management	4	4

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