

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **MOUNT GRACE SCHOOL**

Potters Bar

LEA area: Hertfordshire

Unique reference number: 117583

Headteacher: Mr P Baker

Lead inspector: N A Pett

Dates of inspection: 27<sup>th</sup> – 30<sup>th</sup> September 2004

Inspection number: 268860

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

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## **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Foundation
Age range of pupils:	11-18
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	781
School address:	Church Road Potters Bar Hertfordshire
Postcode:	EN6 1EZ
Telephone number:	(01707) 655 512
Fax number:	(01707) 663 725
Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs B Brilliant

Date of previous 11<sup>th</sup> January 1999  
inspection:

## **CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL**

This is an 11-18 co-educational foundation comprehensive school located on the northern outskirts of Potters Bar, close to the M25. It serves the immediate area of the town but pupils also attend from a number of outlying villages, and a significant proportion live in north London boroughs. There is also significant mobility amongst the school population. A total of 781 pupils and students are on roll, making it smaller in size than other secondary schools nationally. The roll has decreased since the last inspection but this year there has been an increase in numbers entering in Year 7 and returning for sixth form courses. The sixth form is smaller than average with 116 students. Pupils and students come from the full range of socio-economic backgrounds with broadly equal proportions from advantaged and disadvantaged homes. The percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals is below average. A significant proportion of pupils come from minority ethnic heritage but very few pupils require support for English as an additional language. Attainment on entry to the main school and sixth form is below average. The percentage of pupils identified with special educational needs, and holding statements to address their specific needs, are below average. The main categories are for specific learning difficulties and for social, emotional and behavioural difficulties.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
17331	N A Pett	Lead inspector	Work-related learning
14756	J Lovell	Lay inspector	
30648	B Skelton	Team inspector	English English as an additional language
17453	C Edney	Team inspector	Mathematics
27825	J Versey	Team inspector	Science Physics
31680	P Redican	Team inspector	Art and design
2971	K Hooper	Team inspector	Design and technology
30545	D Castell	Team inspector	Geography
25744	T Osgerby	Team inspector	History
18032	I Randall	Team inspector	Information and communication technology
20215	J Mellor	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages
31705	J Mason	Team inspector	Music
8622	H Housden	Team inspector	Physical education
15485	R Butler	Team inspector	Religious education
20324	V Morris	Team inspector	Business studies
28002	S Taylor	Team inspector	Special educational needs Psychology Citizenship
2200	J Stirrup	Team inspector	Media studies and Drama
1995	K Seager	Team inspector	Health and Social care

The inspection contractor was:

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## PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

### OVERALL EVALUATION

**This is an effective school. It is effective because it is now being well led and managed and is improving significantly.** There has been an improvement in pupils' and students' achievement, and standards are beginning to rise but results in public tests and examinations remain below the national average. The quality of teaching is satisfactory and there are examples of very good practice. Value for money is satisfactory in the main school but unsatisfactory in the sixth form.

### THE SCHOOL'S MAIN STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES ARE:

- The leadership and management of the school are good.
- The procedures for monitoring and evaluating teaching and learning are effective.
- Strategies to help pupils improve their language and literacy are good.
- Work is not always well matched to pupils needs.
- The teaching of ICT and numeracy across the curriculum is unsatisfactory.
- The quality of pastoral care is very good.
- Poor attendance and unsatisfactory punctuality hinder the progress of some pupils.
- The use of assessment across the school is not consistent.
- Provision for art and design, religious education, information and communication technology (ICT) and design and technology, and in aspects of health and safety, is unsatisfactory.

Improvement has been satisfactory since the last inspection in 1999, and the pace of improvement has increased in the last year. In Years 7 and 12 the intake of pupils and students has increased as this improvement is recognised by parents and pupils. Examination results and standards are rising. The quality of teaching has improved. Higher expectations for behaviour have reduced the incidence of exclusion and ensured that pupils have a better understanding of acceptable conduct. Improvement in the provision for religious education, a daily act of collective worship, and financial management has been unsatisfactory.

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED

#### YEAR 11 AND 13 RESULTS

Performance compared with:		all schools			similar schools
		2001	2002	2003	2003
Year 11	GCSE/GNVQ examinations	E	E	E	E
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 at the end of Year 9.*

**Pupils' achievement is satisfactory.** Standards on entry to the school are below average, and well below average in language and literacy. The unvalidated results for national tests and examinations in 2004 demonstrate an improvement in standards. However, results in the 2003 National Curriculum tests, at the end of Year 9, were well below the national average and the 2003 GCSE examinations results show that against their prior attainment, pupils' results were

well below average. National comparisons for examination results in the sixth form are unreliable because of the small numbers of candidates. Current standards in Year 9 are below average in English, and average in mathematics, science and ICT in relation to national expectations. In Year 11 standards are below national expectations. In the sixth form students are achieving standards that are broadly average for the courses being taken but individual students achieve well. The achievement of pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory but those who are gifted and talented do not achieve their potential.

**Pupils' attitudes, behaviour and personal development are satisfactory.** Many pupils are responding well to the high expectations that are now set. There is a significant minority who do not respond sensibly and consequently the school has used a significant number of exclusions. The poor attendance and punctuality of a significant minority of pupils hampers their progress. Pupils' and students' personal qualities are satisfactory overall; a significant proportion has good standards. The response to the opportunities for their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory.

## **QUALITY OF EDUCATION**

**The overall quality of education is satisfactory.** Teaching is satisfactory and showing continued improvement, with examples of good and very good teaching in a significant proportion of lessons. As a result pupils' learning has improved and pupils' and students' achievement is being raised, although at times teaching does not always challenge pupils sufficiently. Assessment is satisfactory, but assessment procedures are not consistently implemented across the school. The range of courses in the curriculum is only satisfactory because not all statutory requirements are met. The provision for meeting the academic and vocational needs and aspirations of pupils and students is satisfactory. There is effective careers advice and good links with further and higher education institutions. Extra-curricular activities are satisfactory and include good competitive sporting activities and school performances. Opportunities to enrich the curriculum are satisfactory. The quality of individual care, support and guidance is very good but there are weaknesses in the management of health and safety. Links with primary schools are very good and there are good links with the community at large. Accommodation is good but there are shortcomings in learning resources, especially in ICT, design and technology and business.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

The leadership and management are good, with examples of very good practice, and is a developing strength of the school. The headteacher has a very clear vision for the school, and since his appointment the pace of improvement has quickened. The leadership and management of the senior staff team, and that of subject leaders and pastoral staff, is good, with some very good practice. Improved monitoring is enabling the school to evaluate teaching and learning effectively and to develop its strategic planning. The governors are very supportive, have a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and are effectively developing their role. They do not fulfil some of their statutory duties for the curriculum, and some aspects of health and safety. Good progress is being made in developing financial procedures to improve the value for money that the school gives.

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

A very small number of parents responded to the questionnaire and attended the pre-inspection meeting but their views showed that they appreciate the improvements that are

taking place and that have much more confidence in the provision. They support the work that the school is now doing and consider that their children are beginning to achieve better standards and are being successfully helped to become mature and responsible young people. Most pupils and students are proud of their school and also recognise the improvements. They feel that they are well taught and effectively supported.

## **IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED**

### **THE MOST IMPORTANT THINGS THE SCHOOL SHOULD DO TO IMPROVE ARE:**

- to consistently implement the good strategies to raise pupils' capability in language and literacy;
- ensure work set meets the needs of pupils;
- use assessment consistently;
- improve the provision for art and design;
- improve the teaching and use of ICT and numeracy across the curriculum;
- ensure that the procedures to improve pupils' attendance and punctuality are consistently applied;

### **and, to meet statutory requirements for:**

- the teaching of ICT, design and technology and religious education;
- the provision of a daily act of collective worship; and
- the monitoring of risk assessments and management of health and safety.

## **THE SIXTH FORM AT MOUNT GRACE SCHOOL**

The sixth form is smaller than that found nationally and provides a good curriculum of AS and A2, and vocational courses.

## **OVERALL EVALUATION**

**Sixth form provision is satisfactory.** This year has witnessed a significant increase in student numbers and standards are rising. The relatively few students who have completed two-year courses have achieved well. Access is open and standards on entry are below average for the students' ages, and with a wide range of prior attainment. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Although the provision is adequate it is not cost-effective at present because of the high costs for the small number of students in Year 13. The school recognises this fact because sees it the development of the sixth form as a crucial part of its overall long-term provision for its pupils and students.

### **THE MAIN STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES ARE:**

- There is a clear vision for developing a 14-19 curriculum.
- Students have positive views about the provision and numbers are increasing.
- Teaching and learning are satisfactory, but improving, and standards are rising.
- Statutory requirements are not met for religious education, and the programme for personal development lacks cohesion.
- Provision is adequate but is not cost-effective at present.

## **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 <b>good</b> . Standards are in line with the national average. Teachers use their subject expertise well to successfully raise students' standards and achievement.
Mathematics	Provision is <b>satisfactory</b> . Teaching is good overall and because of this students achieve well. Standards reflect expectations for the courses.
Science	Provision in physics is <b>satisfactory</b> . Standards are in line with the national average. Teachers are very experienced, have good subject knowledge and enthusiasm.
Humanities	Provision in psychology is <b>satisfactory</b> . Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Standards are broadly in line with the national average.
Visual and performing arts and media	Provision in drama is <b>satisfactory</b> . Good teaching promotes good learning so that standards reflect the national average. Students are enthusiastic. Provision in media studies is <b>good</b> . Teaching is good and the good specialist knowledge of teachers enhances students' learning so that standards are in line with the national average.
Business	Provision is <b>good</b> . The quality of teaching is good and as a result standards are being raised and broadly reflect the national average. Resources are insufficient to support the curriculum.
Health and social care	Provision is <b>good</b> . Teaching and learning are good and students achieve well, enabling them to reach standards which are in line with the national average. Students' attitudes to their work are good; they participate well.

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

*The following subjects were sampled:*

French, chemistry, biology, information and communication technology, history, design and technology, music and physical education.

Induction procedures and pastoral support are good. The school has ensured that there is an effective range of courses for academic, professional or vocational careers. There is a good programme for the monitoring of their personal development. The use of assessment is satisfactory overall, but is not used sufficiently well to effectively raise students' awareness of how they can improve their work further. Students are provided with good advice for higher education but other pathways are not as well supported. However, there is no cohesive programme for personal development or for general studies, and the statutory requirements for religious education are not met.

## LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are good with a clear vision for development of a 14-19 continuum. Very successful promotion of the sixth form has arrested the decline in numbers. In the current Year 12, 96 students have been recruited, compared with less than 60 in the previous year. This is making the overall provision more cost effective as group sizes in Year

12 are far more viable than in the much smaller Year 13 classes. The pastoral support is very well organised and managed. Monitoring and evaluation of all aspects of sixth form life is sound and developing well, and the school recognises that the next stage in development is to extend the role of the senior sixth form staff in raising pupils and students aspirations and achievement across the school.

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

The students have positive views about the sixth form, as shown by the increasing numbers who have enrolled this year. They have more confidence as they see the overall improvements in the school, and through the range of courses available. Students consider that they are well taught and that staff are readily available to help them when they are in difficulties. Most consider that they are given responsibility for their life and work. A significant number of students support younger pupils.

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

### **STANDARDS ACHIEVED IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES**

#### **STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS**

Pupils' achievement is satisfactory overall although standards are below the national average.

#### **MAIN STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES**

- A significant majority of pupils have low levels in literacy.
- National Curriculum Test and GCSE examination results were well below average in 2003 in relation to all schools.
- Pupils' attainment is improving through higher achievement although standards, in relation to national expectations by the end of Year 9 and 11, are below average overall.
- Teaching strategies do not always address pupils' differing learning needs.

#### **COMMENTARY**

1. In recent years, pupils' standards on entry into Year 7 have been below average in relation to the levels expected for their ages; a key factor is the limited literacy skills shown by many pupils. The current cohort of pupils who joined the school this year has better levels of prior attainment, reflecting the improving recognition for the school. Standards are beginning to rise as pupils achieve better through the improving quality of teaching and learning, although they remain below average in relation to expectations for pupils' ages.
2. The results at the end of Year 9 (Key Stage 3) in 2003 were well below average based on average points scores in English, mathematics and science, and for all three subjects overall. At the higher levels, results were below the national average in all three subjects. Results were poor in relation to similar schools. Girls performed better than boys in English, but with little difference in their performance in mathematics and science. The trend for improvement has been below that found nationally, reflecting the overall decline in results in the period 1999-2003. When compared with pupils' prior attainment in National tests at the age of 11, results were well below average, showing poor added value and underachievement.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	30.0 (29.8)	33.4 (33.3)
mathematics	32.2 (32.3)	35.4 (34.7)
science	30.6 (29.8)	33.6 (33.3)

*There were 143 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.*

3. At GCSE, the overall results in 2003 were well below average in comparison to all schools nationally for the percentage gaining 5 A\*-C and below average for the percentage gaining five A\*-G grades. The average points score was well below average in relation to all schools and similar schools. The targets set for 2003 results were met. Girls performed better than boys. Higher attainers often develop their potential, and

pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds attain as well as other pupils of similar capability. The trend for improvement has been below that found nationally. In relation to pupils' prior attainment at the age of 14, results were well below the national average, showing poor added value.

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

	School results	National results
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-C grades	28 (28)	52 (50)
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	83 (78)	91 (91)
Percentage of pupils gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	93 (95)	96 (96)
Average point score per pupil (best eight subjects)	26.4 (27.0)	34.7 (34.8)

*There were 160 pupils in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.*

4. The significant factor in recognising that the decline has been arrested is that unvalidated results for 2004 show an increase in the percentage of pupils gaining the average points scores in National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 9 and in GCSE examinations at the end of Year 11. This is a considerable achievement when the issues of pupil mobility and poor attendance are taken into account. The challenging targets set for the end of Year 9 were exceeded in English and mathematics at the expected level, although they were not met in science and in ICT. At the higher level, targets were exceeded in mathematics but not met in the other subjects. At GCSE, the target for the percentage gaining five A\*-C grades was realised. The cohort was close to the target set for average points scores but it did not meet that set for five A\*-G grades. Overall, there are clear indications of improvement, which is reflected in the better quality of teaching and learning.
5. Standards by the end of Year 9 show improvement on previous test results yet remain below average in English, but in line with the average for mathematics and science in relation to National Curriculum levels. Standards in ICT are broadly average for the pupils' ages, showing significant improvement in recent months, even though the pupils do not cover all the statutory requirements in suitable depth. Standards in French are above the expected levels, but in other subjects standards show variation between being in line with or below the levels expected for the pupils' age. Significant weakness is still present in art and design, and in music, where standards are well below expectations. In religious education, standards are below the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus.
6. By the end of Year 11, standards are not as good. This reflects the discontinuity in too many pupils' education brought about by their previous negative attitudes to learning, poor attendance and the overall quality of education. It is also a reflection of the weakness in pupils' literacy skills, which is now being addressed more comprehensively. Standards are well below average in mathematics, and below average in English but broadly average in science in relation to the national expectations. It is only in modern foreign languages that standards are above average for the small minority of pupils who undertake the GCSE examination course. Standards are average in health and social care and physical education, but in all other subjects, standards are below the expectations for the pupils' ages even though the quality of teaching and learning is improving. In design and technology, and in music, standards are well below average. Pupils do not study religious education and thus no judgement can be made. Overall, standards in citizenship are average for the pupils' ages, although the subject is still being developed.
7. The positive element is that achievement overall is broadly average as pupils are now making much more effective gains in their knowledge, understanding and skills, and the targets set for GCSE in 2005 are challenging. However, pupils' capability in language

and literacy across the curriculum is a weakness, and many do not converse fluently and do not have a good understanding of appropriate subject vocabulary. On entry to the school in Year 7 pupils have reading and writing skills well below the national levels for their age. Between a quarter and a third have reading ages at least two years below their chronological and one pupil in ten is four years or more behind with his or her reading. Many experience difficulty in writing for a wide range of purposes and audiences. Similarly, pupils' basic numeracy is below average and they experience difficulty in meeting all the demands made in other subjects. In information and communication technology, standards are below the expected levels because pupils have not had the opportunities to develop their skills, and because there has been insufficient development in subjects across the curriculum. The improved quality of teaching, and access to better resources, gives the potential for standards and achievement to rise quickly.

8. Girls achieve better than boys overall, a reflection of their better attitudes and behaviour. Action is being taken, which is being particularly effective in English, and increasingly in other subjects, to set work which retains their interest. The pupils from minority ethnic heritage achieve as well as other pupils. Only a very small minority require support for English as an additional language, which is effective. Pupils who are gifted and talented are insufficiently identified and are not consistently challenged to develop their capabilities to the full. The achievement of the significant number of pupils identified with special educational needs is satisfactory overall. Those with access to specific programmes achieve well in relation to their targets for learning and behaviour, but there are instances where progress is hampered because other pupils with learning difficulties are not set appropriate work. The achievement of all groups of differing capabilities still suffers when teachers do not address their differing needs adequately. This is partly attributable to the fact that assessment procedures are only satisfactory. Pupils are not always made sufficiently aware of the levels that they are attaining and what they need to do to improve their achievement. Clear progress is being made to remedy this weakness but it remains a key issue for the school to address. The monitoring and evaluation structures for teaching and learning are developing well and the school recognises that to raise standards and achievement further, more consistency is required in ensuring that lesson planning caters for the wide spectrum of pupil capability, especially in literacy.

## **SIXTH FORM**

Entry to the sixth form is open and it caters for the full range of capability. The number of students taking A2 examinations is very small. Standards are rising in both AS/A2 and vocational courses.

## **MAIN STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES**

- Students have achieved well for their capability.
- Standards are rising amongst the small cohorts of students.

## **COMMENTARY**

9. The cohort in 2003 was too small to make reliable comparisons with the national averages. Average points scores are shown in the table below but the figures must be treated with extreme caution.

**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	56.6 (84.2)	89.4 (92.6)
Percentage of entries gaining A-B grades	4.8 (20.6)	32.6 (35.3)
Average point score per pupil	119.0 (162.5)	258.2 (263.3)

*There were 20 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.*

10. Data shows that students achieved well in their AS/A2 and vocational examinations in relation to their prior attainment and capability. For the current Year 13, which is very small, standards are broadly in line across all subjects. Achievement is satisfactory overall with a minority who achieve well. In the subjects inspected at depth, this was particularly apparent in English, mathematics, and in health and social care. Students in Year 12 are in the very early stages of their chosen courses but, following on from their success at GCSE, they display a willingness to learn and are adapting well to the challenges. The weakness in literacy is still apparent amongst some students. Benefits can be seen in that classes for AS and vocational courses have larger numbers, enabling students to compete more. This is a positive development.

**PUPILS' ATTITUDES, VALUES AND OTHER PERSONAL QUALITIES**

Pupils' attitudes and personal development are satisfactory. Behaviour is satisfactory although there is a significant number of exclusions. The progress of too many pupils is undermined by their low attendance; punctuality is unsatisfactory. Pupils generally respond satisfactorily to the opportunities for their personal development.

**MAIN STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES**

- Higher expectations are raising pupils' attitudes.
- Behaviour is satisfactory overall.
- Poor attendance and unsatisfactory punctuality undermines the achievement of a significant minority of pupils.

**Commentary**

11. Pupils' attitudes, behaviour and personal development have been a key area prioritised for improvement to support the raising of achievement and attainment. Overall, attitudes to learning and school are satisfactory, and improving. In essence, they are broadly similar as at the time of the last inspection, after which they declined. Many pupils have only satisfactory self-confidence and esteem and this affects enthusiasm for learning and willingness to take responsibility. Clear expectations are set, and teachers are good role models. As a community, the school shows a growing sense of mutual respect. Relationships between pupils and between pupils and staff are sound, and pupils are developing a better sense of purpose as they progress through the school. When pupils with special educational needs are taught in small groups or individually their attitudes are positive despite their marked difficulties. Most pupils value the rewards that they receive for their work, of which they are justly proud. Pupils are comfortable asking for support from teachers for academic or personal problems, and are confident of receiving it. Gradually, they are developing a sense of responsibility for their work. There is sound

participation in activities outside of lessons, including extra opportunities to extend their learning.

12. Behaviour is generally satisfactory, and most pupils understand the difference between right and wrong. However, a significant minority, mainly boys, behave in a silly and immature manner and, on occasions, disrupt the learning of others. When moving about the school, most pupils are orderly but some are over boisterous. A minority behave in an insolent manner towards staff and are reluctant to follow instructions. Whilst inspectors support parental concerns about the behaviour of some pupils, there was no evidence of systematic bullying or harassment and isolated incidents are addressed quickly and effectively. During the last year there have been a significant number of exclusions involving 52 pupils, with a predominance of boys. Exclusion has been used appropriately for pupils who have repeatedly displayed poor behaviour. Although records are maintained, the school is not sufficiently rigorous in its work in its analysis of exclusions. Details are shown in the table on the following page.

**Ethnic background of pupils**

**Exclusions in the last school year**

Categories used in the Annual School Census	Number of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	598	96	1
White Irish	3	1	0
White – any other White background	19	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	17	3	0
Mixed – White and Asian	7	2	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	15	1	0
Asian or Asian British - Indian	1	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani	2	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	3	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	6	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	14	0	0
Black or Black British – African	13	5	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	7	2	0
Chinese	6	0	0
Any other ethnic group	16	2	0
Parent/pupil preferred not to say	7	4	0
Information not obtained	25	3	0
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>759</b>	<b>119</b>	<b>1</b>

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

13. Poor attendance and unsatisfactory punctuality undermines the achievement of a significant minority of pupils. In 2002/3, overall attendance was well below the national average. However, as a result of good procedures to promote attendance, there has been a good improvement to 90.3 per cent in the last year, and this has helped many pupils to improve their performance through better continuity in their learning. Daily attendance is recorded electronically. The school has recognised the need to review the coding of absences, and to initiate a paper based back-up system to address unresolved problems to support rigorous analysis. A minority of registers are not always completed in the prescribed time, undermining the strategies to improve attendance and the accuracy of attendance records, and raises issues of health and safety. Punctuality is unsatisfactory. A significant number of pupils live outside the catchment area and are susceptible to public transport delays, which are beyond their control. The buildings are spread over a large area, and whilst lessons now generally start on time, there are a minority of pupils who lack a sense of urgency when moving between buildings.

**Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)**

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data:	8.1	School data:	1.9
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.*

14. The provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, and their response to this provision, is satisfactory. Spiritual and cultural development is not as strong as moral and social development. The provision for developing pupils' self-knowledge and spiritual awareness is satisfactory. Teachers treat pupils with consideration and help them to understand other people's feelings, values and beliefs. However, pupils often find it difficult to express their views freely, reflecting the limitations in language and literacy. On the whole, they show good respect for the feelings, values and beliefs of others. Religious education does not make a sufficient contribution to pupils' understanding of the spiritual dimension to life as it is not taught effectively. Reference is made to a range of issues in other subjects but there is no formal planning. The school does not comply with the statutory requirement for a daily act of collective worship. Assemblies seen during the inspection only made a satisfactory contribution, and there is much inconsistency in tutorial periods.
15. Moral provision is good and pupils learn well the responsibilities of living together in a community through the social provision. Where opportunity is given, pupils work effectively in pairs and groups to develop their capacity for collaborative learning. They have opportunities in school to hear from representatives of the community such as the police, and to go out of school to engage in community activities. The school council engenders in pupils a sense of democracy, and in citizenship, pupils were being made very aware of the electoral process. Pupils demonstrate the need to care for others via their participation in paired reading, mentoring and buddy schemes, as well as the charitable work undertaken. Year 8 pupils responded very well to the recent opportunities of their residential week.
16. There is satisfactory provision for pupils' cultural development; good opportunities exist in art, media studies, music, drama and English. However, there are insufficient planned opportunities for pupils to have direct personal experience so that they are well prepared for the ethnic and cultural diversity of contemporary society. The fact that there are pupils from a wide range of ethnicity in the school does not mean that it is implicitly achieved. Apart from some pupils' posters about Divali, there is little around the school to draw to pupils' attention the multi-cultural nature of society.

## **SIXTH FORM**

### **MAIN STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES**

- Sixth formers show sound levels of maturity.
- Most students set a good example to younger pupils and participate well in school democracy.
- Their positive attitudes contribute well to their own development and contribution to the life of the school.

### **Commentary**

17. Students in Year 13 who have chosen to remain to complete their studies, and the majority of those who have just entered Year 12, show sound levels of maturity. They involve themselves in the life of the school through supporting younger pupils and participate well in school democracy. Students speak positively about the opportunities that they have and which are developing as the school improves. They are proud of their school and want to see it succeed. Data on attendance shows that the majority attend

regularly. During the inspection they made good use of their private study time, and have the facility of their own block. Students were seen enjoying social interaction, discussing a range of work and news issues, as well as making good use of the time for their work. Through their behaviour and attitudes, many show that they have a good sense of moral and social principles. They relate very well together. The positive attitude of most sixth formers is making a good contribution to their achievement.

## THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The overall quality of education is **satisfactory**. Teaching and learning are improving although remain satisfactory overall. The curriculum provides a sound range of opportunities although it has some shortcomings. It is satisfactorily enhanced by extra-curricular activities and links with the community. Pastoral care is good but there are shortcomings in health and safety arrangements. Sixth form provision is developing effectively with increasing numbers of students on roll.

### Teaching and learning

**Teaching and learning are satisfactory** and show significant improvement since the last inspection. There are examples of very good and outstanding practice, which encourage pupils' and students' good learning. Assessment procedures have been established but need to be used more effectively.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The improving quality of teaching and learning is beginning to drive up achievement and attainment.
- There has been significant improvement since the last inspection.
- Pupils consider that they are generally well taught and that most staff are readily available to help them with any problems.
- The use of ICT is underdeveloped.
- The differing needs of pupils are not always addressed well enough.
- Not all teachers use the good assessment procedures well enough to support achievement.

### Commentary

18. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall. During the inspection, it was at least satisfactory in well over nine out of ten lessons, and at least good in over half. In just over one in ten it was very good or better. There has been a significant improvement since the last inspection when teaching was unsatisfactory in 18 per cent of lessons. In this inspection it was three per cent.

#### *Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 120 lessons*

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
2 (1.5 %)	12 (10 %)	62 (51.5 %)	40 (33 %)	4 (3 %)	0 (0 %)	0 (0 %)

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

19. The overall judgement of satisfactory takes into account the quality of teaching and learning over time, and this has not been as effective as that seen during the inspection.

Work samples show how teaching is improving as a result of the staff development programme and the rigour that has been introduced into the monitoring and evaluation of teaching by senior staff during the last 4 terms. This is beginning to impact positively on driving up achievement and attainment. There are differences between the quality of teaching and learning in Years 7 to 9 (Key Stage 3) and in Years 10 and 11 (Key Stage 4). In Years 7 to 9, teaching in Year 9 was weaker than in the other two year groups, reflecting the attitudes and behaviour of a minority of pupils. Similarly in Year 11, teaching and learning were not as strong as in Year 10, for the same reasons. The most consistent teaching was seen in English, science, modern foreign languages, geography, history, and physical education. Weaker teaching was seen in religious education. Good strides are being made in specific ICT lessons because of the increased emphasis on involving pupils in their work. However, not all teachers are making sufficient use of cross-curricular opportunities to support pupils in their application of ICT to their learning. Statutory curriculum requirements are not met as pupils do not have access to all elements of the programmes of study. Requirements are also not met in design and technology, thus weakening the learning for all pupils. The teaching of personal, social and health education (PSHE) and citizenship is satisfactory but there are no formal attempts to link topics which may be part of the curriculum in other subjects. Overall, the quality of teaching and learning makes a satisfactory contribution in preparing pupils for the next stage of their education.

20. Expectations for behaviour are generally sound and most teachers manage their classes well, using effective relationships, and the rewards and sanctions systems. This approach is developing better attitudes and standards of behaviour and so contributing to raising the overall ethos of the school. The climate for learning is sound, an improvement since the last inspection and HMI (Her Majesty's Inspectors) monitoring visit, when it was judged as a serious weakness. Where it is particularly good, it encourages pupils to work independently and to take responsibility for their work. However, not all staff are consistent enough in their expectations for standards of behaviour, and there are instances where lessons are only satisfactory because of this shortcoming.
21. When teaching and learning are good or better pupils are really beginning to benefit and comment about the opportunities and support that they are given. On the whole, lesson objectives are clearly stated, so that pupils understand what they are expected to achieve. Teachers use their good subject expertise well. They ask challenging questions to develop pupils' knowledge, understanding and skills. They also concentrate on addressing the weakness in pupils' literacy skills by ensuring that questions are well framed and that key vocabulary is well explained. Some good strategies are used to improve writing, such as writing frames. In the most effective lessons, expectations for work are now higher, and have been beneficial in raising achievement. The best lessons are well planned and the strategies that teachers adopt hold the interest of their classes. For example, the challenges posed in some English and science lessons. Good work is done in modern foreign languages. In health and social care, pupils enjoy the good variety of learning styles: games, discussions in pairs and groups, independent research and brainstorming. Teachers help students develop study skills. There is satisfactory use of homework across all year groups, consolidating and extending pupils' learning.
22. Although teachers may know that certain pupils have special educational needs, they do not always have sufficient information to plan approaches and resources to match their needs. Heavy reliance is placed on grouping by capability and the effective work of a small number of teaching assistants. They are not always sufficiently involved in the

planning stage of the lesson, limiting their effectiveness. In some mainstream lessons, teachers do not address needs sufficiently, hindering the progress of those with the most complex needs. There are very good links with outside agencies providing suggested strategies for individual pupils, but these are not always communicated well enough to the subject teachers and so they do not plan effectively. Individual education plans are not always sufficiently practical to enable teachers to plan effectively. Management arrangements established at the beginning of term are already beginning to impact on these weaknesses so that both teachers and pupils are better informed. The school is beginning to identify those pupils who show that they are gifted and talented but support for them is unsatisfactory at present.

23. In a significant minority of lessons, work set does not always meet the differing needs of pupils sufficiently. Although assessment procedures have improved since the last inspection, when they were a key issue, they are not consistently used. The collection of data showing what levels pupils are at is developing well. Good use is made of national testing systems and previous National Curriculum test results. In addition, pupils' preferred learning styles have been assessed. Teachers, pupils and parents are given this information together with target levels for the end of Year 9. The system is better developed in Years 10 and 11, which has been a priority, where most pupils and teachers are aware of pupils' minimum target grades and the progress being made towards them. Pupils in Year 10 also stated that knowing their levels is a motivating factor for achieving more highly. New data will be entered termly, so that pupils can be picked up early if they fail to make expected progress and intervention programmes put into action. However, this is quite a new development and the response of departments is variable, some departments using this information more thoroughly than others. In English and health and social care, progress has been good. In the majority of subject areas, not enough use is being made of marking to show pupils what they must do to improve. Too many targets given are very vague, such as 'work harder', 'write in more detail', and it is not linked to curriculum targets and clear guidance on how to improve. Few pupils are really aware of their curriculum targets, even though they are displayed in most teaching rooms. Specific departmental analysis has been made of what factors promote the best learning and progression at source rather than relying on 'catch-up' booster classes to deal with underachievers, but this is at an early stage of development.

## ***Sixth form***

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall and support students' achievement.
- Assessment procedures are developing but are not used consistently enough for students to understand how they can improve.

### **Commentary**

24. The overall quality of teaching is satisfactory yet with examples of good teaching. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen and no judgement can be made about specific improvement as data was not available in the last report. However, work scrutiny and talking with students reveals that it has improved. Students consider that they are generally well taught and that most staff are readily available to help them with any problems. Most of the characteristics listed above, and subjects in which the best teaching occurred, are equally applicable to the sixth form. However, teaching groups in

Year 13 are often very small, consisting of sometimes only two students. Staff work well in these instances and students benefit from the often individual support. What it is lacking is in the competitive edge provided by other students in larger classes.

**Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 36 lessons**

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
0 (0 %)	8 (22 %)	16 (44 %)	12 (33 %)	0 (0 %)	0 (0 %)	0 (0 %)

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

25. Assessment is satisfactory overall, and the factors outlined above for the main school are equally applicable in developments in the sixth form. Because of the small numbers, much of the feedback to students on the quality of their work is delivered orally. Students usually have a clear target grade for their courses but, as in the main school, are not always clear about what they need to do to reach it.

**The curriculum**

The curriculum is satisfactory for pupils aged 11 to 16 and pupils' experiences are enhanced by a satisfactory range of extra-curricular activities.

**Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The curriculum is flexible and includes vocational elements, which prepare pupils of all capabilities for progression onto courses in the sixth form and employment.
- Statutory requirements are not met in ICT, religious education and design and technology, or for collective worship.
- Provision for the minority of gifted and talented pupils is unsatisfactory.
- The range of sporting activities, particularly for boys, outside the school day is good.
- Many subjects offer clubs to support learning at lunchtime and after school.
- There are limitations in resources.

**Commentary**

26. The curriculum meets the teaching time recommendations, offers equal access to a range of opportunities and inclusion is sound. Open access enables pupils to opt for the courses they want to take within the limitations of the timetable. Pupils in Year 7 and 9 are offered a business dynamics course, which prepares them for vocational courses. There are two vocational courses in health and social care and business studies running alongside traditional GCSE courses. There is an effective range of GCSE and vocational options available in Years 10 and 11, which are an effective approach to the 14-19 curriculum offer and good innovation. The requirements of the locally agreed syllabus are not met in religious education in Years 10 and 11. Requirements are not met for ICT or for design and technology as elements of the programmes of study are not taught in Years 7 to 9. The school does not provide a daily act of collective worship for its pupils.
27. The personal, social and health education programme, linked to citizenship, supports the pupils' personal development and covers the aspects of sex education and drugs awareness. Careers education is integrated into the personal and social education

course, and units develop pupils' skills of decision-making, completing personal statements and interview techniques. The programme is well supported by the local careers service provider and a wide range of local businesses who provide work experience opportunities.

28. Pupils with special educational needs have the same access to the curriculum as their peers. In addition, pupils aged 14 to 16, who may be struggling with coursework, may take an option, which provides them with support lessons. Pupils find these sessions very useful and feel that they achieve well. Many subjects offer activities to support learning at lunchtime and after school. Additionally, there is provision for a small number of pupils who are finding attendance at school difficult so that they can receive some of their lessons in very small groups. Some of these pupils take a GCSE a year early to build their self-esteem. Provision for the small number of pupils who speak English as an additional language is satisfactory. Provision for pupils who are gifted and talented is unsatisfactory. The criteria for the identification of these pupils are not well developed and the provision for them in lessons and outside the school day is limited.
29. Extra-curricular activities are satisfactory. They are generally well supported but travelling arrangements prevent some pupils from attending. The physical education department offers good provision for pupils to be involved in a range of team games at lunchtime and after school and to play for the school in teams at various levels. Additionally, there is a dance workshop after school open to all. School productions are presented from time to time, and are well supported. There are some residential trips, including a Year 8 trip to Bude, and a range of activities at the end of the school year, which include paint-balling, camping and visits to museums.
30. Overall, there is a satisfactory match of number, qualifications and expertise of teachers to the curriculum. The school has been innovative in recruiting teachers in shortage subjects and now has specialist teachers in all subjects apart from RE. It employs staff involved in graduate training and has some unqualified teachers. The provision of learning and technical support is variable across subjects but is satisfactory overall. Accommodation is good overall. Due to the disparate nature of the site it does pose problems for rapid movement and this has an adverse effect on punctuality and teaching time. Resources are satisfactory overall. The library is too small for a school of this size, but it is well used. Shortages do exist in ICT and in design and technology for both hardware and software. Resources for business studies are unsatisfactory. Nevertheless, there are good plans to address shortcomings in resources across the curriculum, and they are generally used well.

## **SIXTH FORM**

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- There is a good range of courses, which meet needs well.
- There is an effective 14 - 19 curriculum structure.
- Requirements for religious education are not met.

### **Commentary**

31. The breadth of curriculum opportunities in the sixth form is good. The leadership of the school has a clear vision for the development of the curriculum and has established clear routes for pupils aged 14 to 19, particularly by providing vocationally related courses. The

curriculum offered to students entering the sixth form in 2004 is well matched to their needs, aspirations and capabilities and was a major factor in attracting much larger numbers. Together with the open access policy, the curriculum ensures good equality and opportunity for students.

32. Level 3 courses offer a mix of Advanced level GCE, AVCE and BTec courses. A large proportion of students combine vocationally-orientated and academic courses. The range of vocationally-orientated courses offered in Year 12 has been increased this year. Although class sizes in Year 13 are small, and there are very small numbers in Year 12 in some traditional A-level subjects, such as chemistry and history, the school is moving towards having a viable sixth form. Sociology and law are taught using video conferencing, thereby extending the range of subjects further. The Level 2 GNVQ/BTec courses in art and design, business studies, health and social care and media studies all have sufficient numbers to be viable. They are taught separately from Level 3, but form part of the continuum.
33. There is no provision for religious education in the sixth form. The enrichment programme was still being arranged at the time of the inspection. Examples of the provision are for students to take part in physical education if they wish, for community service and mentoring younger pupils. General studies is a GCE A-level course for a limited number of students only. The development of key skills relies on the contribution made by each of the subjects studied. Study skills have been taught as part of the tutorial programme in time spent with the form tutor. This year's programme is still to be arranged. Staffing is adequate. The accommodation is good in that students are taught in the main school rooms but they also have a dedicated section for social and private study. It has access to ICT.

### Care, guidance and support

The provision to ensure pupils' care, welfare, health and safety is **unsatisfactory because of weaknesses in the management of health and safety**. The provision of support, advice and guidance, based on monitoring pupils' achievements and personal development is **good** in the main school and **satisfactory** in the sixth form. The involvement of pupils through seeking, valuing and acting on their views is **good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of pastoral care is very good.
- Child protection arrangements are very good.
- The management of health and safety is not effective.

### COMMENTARY

34. The overall provision for pastoral care has improved. The leadership provided by Heads of Year is very good. The high quality of pastoral care, in a culture in which every individual child matters, has a significant impact on pupils' personal development, which is well monitored. Pupils feel well supported. They have very good relationships with adults in the school, whom they feel confident to approach if they have a problem. A school nurse, who visits weekly, and a full time counsellor are available for individual pupils or groups. Pupils speak positively about the sixth form students, who are attached

to Year 7 and 8 tutor groups, and who support them in a number of other ways. An assistant to the Heads of Year, who has a non-teaching role, enables pastoral issues to be dealt with quickly and effectively.

35. The monitoring of pupils' academic development is satisfactory. Judgements have already been made earlier in this report that the procedures of assessment need to be developed, and this is essential to reinforce overall monitoring. A computerised record system allows efficient monitoring and target setting; for example, the MISP (Monitoring Individual Students Progress) regularly operates through Years 10 and 11. An intervention strategy in Year 9 raised targeted pupils' attainment in their National Curriculum tests. Pupils with special educational needs are now being much more closely monitored by the learning support department staff. Programmes of work to suit their needs are being developed but have not yet had time to improve the overall provision. Individual education plans are reviewed with pupils and all those with statements attend their annual review meeting. Pupils with English as an additional language are also supported effectively.
36. The school actively seeks and values pupils' views; for example by analysing pupil questionnaires. The Student Voice forum is well supported and is an effective way in which pupils can raise issues. Pupils appreciate this. Pupils in Year 7 indicated that they valued their very good induction arrangements, helping them to settle in easily. In Year 9, pupils are well supported in making their GCSE option choices and parents are given the opportunity of fully involving themselves in discussing the available options. The careers co-ordinator works closely with tutors to prepare pupils for working on this programme and subsequently evaluating the experience. In Year 11, pupils are prepared for their transition to work or into the sixth form. The support for pupils who wish to transfer to other post-16 provision is less well developed. The quality of the work related curriculum, which includes careers education and guidance, is satisfactory overall. Careers education is integrated into the personal and social education course throughout the school. The programme provides appropriate work to extend pupils' personal skills.
37. Child Protection procedures are very good. Links with outside agencies and support for pupils in care are very effective. The provision for health and safety is unsatisfactory. In particular, day-to-day assessment of potential hazards needs to be more rigorous and all staff made aware of the need to identify them. Several concerns were identified during the inspection and suitable action was taken. Auditing, for example, is not a routine practice; there is a tendency to react as problems arise. Not all of the required risk assessments were to hand during the inspection. A report on a survey carried out by the LEA is awaited. The provision for first aid is satisfactory and pupils are generally well cared for. There are some weaknesses in the overall provision. Trained staff are not always available after school and the list of qualified staff is not up to date. First aid supplies meet requirements but first aid cupboards/boxes are not always marked and are not readily accessible at all times.

### ***Sixth form***

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

- There is good provision for support.
- Satisfactory access is given for post-sixth form advice and guidance.

## Commentary

38. There is effective pastoral support for students. The procedures to advise them prior to their entry to post-16 courses is good. The school has ensured that there is an effective range of courses for academic, professional or vocational careers. There is a good programme for the monitoring of their personal development, and structures exist to help students causing concerns. With increased numbers this will have to be carefully monitored. Students report that they are treated fairly and teachers work with them in a collaborative way, especially in the sensitive support given to students with special educational needs going into the sixth form. Academic progress, of students who are now in Year 13 is good, reflecting the low numbers and often individual support. The shortcomings which exist in the overall procedures for assessment throughout the school militate against a thorough picture with larger numbers.
39. Students report, and inspectors agree, that the guidance for students as they consider their future, either in education or career pathways needs to be more comprehensive. Students are provided with good, impartial advice on making choices in respect of higher education and careers and work is being undertaken to raise aspirations by arranging, for example, a day trip to look at the Colleges in Oxford. However, other pathways are not as well supported.
40. Students consider that their opinions are listened to and appreciate the good accommodation which they have. It provides very well for teaching and learning through effective study facilities. However, with increasing numbers this will be put under considerable strain.

## Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The partnership between school and home is **good**, although a minority of parents do not respond to the school's efforts to involve them in their children's learning. This is a very similar picture to that found at the time of the previous inspection. Links with local schools and colleges are good and those with the community provide satisfactory support for pupils' learning. Together, these links play a positive part in supporting pupils' learning and provide opportunities to enhance the curriculum.

## MAIN STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

- The partnership with parents makes a positive contribution to pupils' learning although a minority of parents do not involve themselves sufficiently in supporting their children.
- Strategies in individual education plans do not help parents to support their children at home.
- The Parent Teacher Association works hard to support the work of the school.
- Parents are provided with very good information about their children's progress and good information about the life and work of the school.
- The school does not sufficiently seek parents' views.
- Links with local schools are good.

## Commentary

41. The majority of parents provide good support for their children's learning and personal development. The school has maintained the good partnership with the majority of

parents found at the time of the last inspection and has successfully improved some elements such as attendance at consultation meetings and the quality of reports provided to parents detailing pupils' progress. The school has also successfully promoted parental attendance at other events such as a 'Drug Awareness Evening' and a Year 7 study skills presentation. There does, however, still remain a minority of parents who do not readily involve themselves with the school and their children's learning. Parents with children who have statements of special educational needs are invited to, and attend, the annual review meeting. Individual education plans are discussed with parents at consultation evenings, but these documents do not contain strategies to enable the parents to support their children's learning well at home. The PTA successfully raises sums of money to support the work of the school and provides additional resources. Its work is appreciated by staff and benefits pupils and students well.

42. Parents are generally pleased with the school and the education which it provides and have positive views of what they perceive to be an improving school. Through regular newsletters ('Amazing Grace'), informative letters about specific activities and events, and the school's web site, parents are kept well informed. Staff seek to involve parents when there are pastoral or academic concerns and in making option choices. Annual reports provide a very good picture of what pupils are doing, how they are progressing and what they need to do to improve. Reports and letters are translated when needed. Consultation meetings, and other information giving sessions, combine to involve parents in a partnership to support their child's learning. Staff are readily accessible to provide information or discuss concerns. The school normally manages to resolve any concerns of parents informally and there is an effective complaints procedure.
43. Parents' views are very important to the school and they are working hard to address areas which have informally been identified by parents as weaknesses. An example is a review of the sixth form curriculum, developing parallel academic and vocational courses. News of progress in these areas is communicated well through 'Amazing Grace' but the school has not yet developed formal structures for seeking parents' and other stakeholders' views to contribute to the school improvement planning process.
44. Links with local primary schools and with other educational institutions are good and benefit their induction into the school. Community links are satisfactory and in some cases, such as the links with the local police, good or very good. Links with the community and a range of visits and visitors, enhance the curriculum well. They support pupils' personal and social development in widening their experiences and giving them opportunities to learn about the needs of others. The school has very good support for its work experience programme from local businesses.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

The overall leadership and management of the school is **good**, and has the potential to build on the improvements already achieved. The impetus for improvement is good. In the comparatively short time that the headteacher has been in post he has shown very good qualities in leadership, initiating a programme set on driving up standards and improving the overall quality of education. The governors are effectively developing their role.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The very good leadership and vision of the headteacher.

- Governors have a clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses but do not fulfil some of their statutory duties.
- There is effective support from the senior staff team in their roles as key leaders and managers.
- There is inconsistency in middle management but some very good practice.
- The school gives satisfactory value for money overall but the sixth form is not cost-effective.

## Commentary

45. The leadership and management strategies that the headteacher has brought to the school have brought about an effective programme of school improvement. Since the last inspection, standards and the overall quality of education declined and the school experienced a significant period of instability whereby it did not have sustained and effective leadership and management. The decline was very serious and it is through the headteacher's vision that the overall ethos of the school is rapidly rising. Much still needs to be done but the vision is well shared by governors, staff, pupils and parents.
46. The governors are very supportive of the school and are working very hard to ensure that the best education opportunities exist. The headteacher and chair of governors have a very good professional relationship and governors operate well within established structures. Several governors are new, but overall the governing body has a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Using this information, they are challenging and supporting the headteacher and staff well. However, governance is only satisfactory overall as the governors do not fulfil their statutory duties in relation to the curriculum for collective worship and religious education, and for some aspects of health and safety.
47. The school has clearly stated aims and objectives, which are being satisfactorily met, yet with increasing success. The headteacher leads the school very effectively and delegates management tasks very well amongst his senior leadership team, where there is a rigorous approach to continue to develop the overall provision. The stated aim, as shown on the prospectus folder, is 'Committed to Excellence. The increasingly positive morale and developing ethos of the school indicate the potential to realise this aim. The foundations for the improvement are clearly illustrated in the development plan, which is now more strategic and has measurable outcomes. It is well augmented by separate subject and pastoral plans, providing a framework for measuring the success of change.
48. Leadership and management in subjects is satisfactory overall, though practice varies. There are examples of very good practice. Difficulties in recruitment mean that some middle managers are very new in post, but they are rapidly assimilating their roles and are aware of strengths and weaknesses in their areas. Effective planning to implement the required changes, for example, in science and in design and technology, are taking place. The special educational needs co-ordinator has been in post for only three weeks, but in that time has changed the way in which the learning support department is perceived within the school. She has a clear vision, is enthusiastic about her new role and leads a team of very supportive staff with a strong team spirit, who recognise the short comings of the department. Good communication channels are developing to ensure that information provided to subject teachers is useful when they are planning their lessons. Pastoral staff provide very good leadership and management. There are good procedures for staff induction and newly qualified teachers and teachers on the graduate

training programme have a good induction programme and are well supported in departments. Professional development of teachers and learning support staff, which have been well led by the headteacher, have proved to be most effective. Good use is made of external consultants, funded by the local authority, to support new heads of departments and this has contributed to improvements, for example in mathematics. The overall day-to-day life of the school is enhanced by the effective work of the administrative, financial, technical and caretaking staff.

49. Overall improvement since the last inspection in 1999 has been satisfactory, a judgement substantiated by the much more rigorous pace over the last year. Prior to this, progress had been unsatisfactory, because there had not been a substantive headteacher for sometime. The significantly higher numbers who have joined the sixth form this year is indicative of the progress being made. Although as yet unvalidated, examination results have been raised. The overall quality of teaching has been improved, as have the procedures for assessment, although they still require more development. Monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning has been instrumental in establishing improvement. Procedures are effectively linked to performance management. Higher expectations for behaviour have reduced the incidence of exclusion and ensured that pupils have a better understanding of the conduct that will be accepted. Attendance and punctuality show improvement, as does the provision for pupils with special educational needs and in financial monitoring, although in all aspects there is still much to be done. Where improvement has been unsatisfactory is in the provision for religious education and a daily act of collective worship, and in financial arrangements.
  
50. Following a period of changes in the senior leadership team and the appointment of a new school finance manager, a number of issues were identified in the most recent audit. These have generally been addressed, although the school is still in the process of preparing an inventory. The fluctuation in anticipated numbers on roll exacerbated matters. Failings from weaknesses in budget monitoring combined with some incorrect information regarding anticipated numbers on roll, resulted in a number of write-offs, one-off payments and repayment of monies received incorrectly. This led to a significant issue in school funding, and figures available distort the unit costs and the overall balances. There is an agreement with the LEA to adjust the financial discrepancy through a detailed three-year recovery plan.

## Financial information

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

	2003-04 (£)	2004-05 Projected (£)
Total Income	3,448,722	3,307,995
Total Expenditure	3,678,180	3,519,225
Excess of Income over Expenditure	-229,458	3,307,995
Expenditure per Pupil	4,739	4,535.12
Balance Brought Forward from Previous Year	238,118	8,660.00
Balance Carried Forward to Next Year	8,660.00	-202,600

51. Good progress has been made in developing financial procedures and systems despite staffing problems affecting the administrative staff. The principles of best value are not yet sufficiently embedded in the school's use of financial and other data. Recognising that the school is improving and taking account of the quality of teaching and learning, standards and overall provision, the school is effective. After adjusting the unit costs, to remove the extraordinary historic items, expenditure per pupil is broadly in line with the national median and the school is providing satisfactory value for money.

### **Sixth form**

There is a clear vision for developing the role of the sixth form. Pastoral leadership and management of the sixth form are good although there are weaknesses in strategic planning and evaluation of the budget. The sixth form provides unsatisfactory value for money but is judged to be adequate.

### **MAIN STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES**

- There is a clear vision for the sixth form as a fundamental part of the development of the whole school.
- Leadership and management are good.
- The current year's sixth form provides a good choice in curriculum and has attracted more students than was the case previously.
- Value for money is unsatisfactory.

### **Commentary**

52. The leadership and management are good overall. There is a clear vision for the sixth form as a growing and integral part of the school. It is set on providing a well-balanced academic and vocational curriculum, which meets the needs and aspirations of students and the wider community. The vision is for a 'seamless' 14-19 provision. Very successful promotion of sixth form has arrested the decline in numbers. In the current Year 12, 96 students have been recruited, compared with less than 50 in the previous year. The head of sixth form took up her post a year ago. She provides students with good pastoral support and is increasingly taking responsibility for linking this with academic monitoring, and in her contribution to whole school formal development planning.

53. The overall governance of the sixth form is satisfactory. Governors are concerned to develop provision to respond to students' needs and to raise the community's perception of the school as providing a quality continuum of learning through to age 19. They have a good vision, and challenge and support the school in developing its ethos. Formal strategic planning, supported by effective procedures for monitoring and evaluating, is at an early stage of development, reflecting the instability in provision and low numbers in the sixth form. The absence of accurate historic financial data and detailed analysis and comparison of current data presents difficulties in monitoring and evaluating provision. The increase in number on roll, and the range of courses available, are very positive developments. Taking account of the overall and improving quality of teaching and learning, students' achievement and standards, the provision is adequate. Unit costs are high in this developmental stage and currently the sixth form provision is giving unsatisfactory value for money, although the potential exists to rectify this weakness.

## **WORK-RELATED LEARNING**

The provision for work-related learning is **satisfactory**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Pupils have good opportunities to learn for, about and through work to help them in their development.
- Teaching and learning are sound.
- Leadership and management are good.
- Procedures for assessment are underdeveloped.

### **Commentary**

54. The quality of the work related curriculum, which includes careers education and guidance, is satisfactory overall. A strength is the business dynamics course followed by all pupils in Year 7 to 9 and which prepares them for vocational courses. Careers education is an integral part of the work-related curriculum and operates well as a part of the personal and social education course throughout the school. Careers related units develop pupils' skills of decision-making, completing personal statements and interview techniques. There are visitors from a range of local businesses and public services, both in formal and informal contexts. The programme provides appropriate work to extend pupils' personal skills, and to support them in their selection of option choices in Years 10 and 11, and post 16. Resources are good with inputs from the local careers service. Accommodation for specific careers guidance is good. There is an area within the library for careers resources and there is appropriate space available for private interviews. This provision support pupils' learning for and about work.
55. Within the Years 10 and 11 curriculum there are two vocational courses, health and social care and business studies running alongside traditional GCSE courses. These add to the knowledge and understanding of that minority of pupils who take the courses. In Year 10, pupils are prepared for a period of work experience. All pupils take part in this programme. The careers co-ordinator works closely with tutors to prepare pupils on this programme and subsequently evaluating the experience. These opportunities help pupils to learn through work opportunities.

56. The limited amount of teaching seen was sound. In the PSHE and citizenship sessions, the work was effectively prepared and pupils were involved effectively in completing assignments and discussing opportunities, supporting their literacy development. However, in this early stage there is insufficient attention given to ensuring that work is set to challenge all pupils adequately. The assessment and recording system is insufficiently developed, and the school recognises that this is a fundamental aspect for attention.
57. The head of careers is committed to improving provision and has a realistic development plan based on existing resources. She provides good leadership and recognises that provision needs to be improved by acquiring and making accessible suitable resources, improving displays to stimulate interest and providing training for staff to develop their understanding and knowledge.

## **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**

- Results in national tests and examinations are improving.
- Teaching is good overall.
- There is an effective emphasis on improving pupils' language skills in all years.
- Boys' underachievement is being tackled.
- Leadership and management are good but improving assessment is a key factor in raising standards.

##### **Commentary**

58. Pupils enter the school with standards in English that are well below average for their age, and well below those in mathematics and science. A much smaller proportion than the national average attain the higher levels in English at that age. Results in the National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 9 in 2003 were well below the national average for both boys and girls. Results were well below the levels achieved nationally by pupils with comparable prior attainment. From 2000 to 2003, the trend for improvement was below the national trend. However, unvalidated results for 2004, show that the percentage of pupils who have gained the expected level increased significantly.
59. GCSE English language results in 2003 were well below the national average. The proportion of boys gaining grades A\*-C in English in 2003 was less than half the national rate for boys and depressed the overall figure. Girls attain worse than girls nationally but boys' attainment is much worse than boys compared nationally. Standards in English literature are closer to national levels, but the proportion achieving at least a grade C is

still below the national figure, with girls nearly twice as successful as boys. Unvalidated results for 2004 show a much higher percentage of pupils being successful in their examinations, although results will still be below the national level. Effective measures to address the issue of boys' underachievement are being taken by the school and by the English department. These include the choice of texts studied, the types of assignments set and in Year 10, the setting up of a boys only class.

60. Standards by the end of Years 9 and 11 are below average in relation to national expectations for pupils' ages. Standards of literacy have consistently been well below the national average on entry in Year 7, and as shown in the section below in literacy across the curriculum, continue to be a barrier to the raising of standards. Pupils' achievement from Year 7 to Year 9 is unsatisfactory and they do not make up the deficit with which they entered the school. This is because the teaching does not always meet the needs of all pupils, reflected in standards achieved in national tests at the end of Year 9. The achievement of pupils in Years 10 and 11 is satisfactory in relation to their low prior attainment. This is because effective teaching is well focused on the skills that pupils need for coursework and for examinations.
61. Teaching is good overall. In seven of the lessons observed the teaching was good and in four it was satisfactory. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen. The best teaching in Years 7 to 9 includes effective methods to improve pupils' language skills, from the introduction of new words to an understanding of how language works. Teachers have a good command of the subject but do not always use a good range of appropriate activities when teaching Years 7 to 9. Most of the activities are for the whole class, directed by teachers, and the pace is too often slow. There is inadequate use of group work and of investigative or creative thinking requiring pupils to report back on their own learning. A three part lesson structure is used, but often without the aims or the evaluation being presented to pupils in ways that make them see what skills they can learn if they work hard. However, books are well marked in relation to national level with good recognition of personal achievement and good guidance on how to improve. Teaching is stronger in Years 10 and 11, and is good overall. Good command of the subject and good management of pupils are strengths of the teaching. Teaching is more varied and more imaginative, using photographs to represent people in complex relationships or playing a "thinking hats" game to promote discussion. A variety of measures, including a boys only group, are working to raise the attainment of boys. Language skills are well taught, from correct use of technical vocabulary to the construction of good coursework essays.
62. Leadership and management are good. Improvement plans are good and match the school's targets, for example in the structure of lessons or raising the attainment of boys. The curriculum is good, with a good balance of work including language skills, personal writing and a wide range of literature and media studies. Extra-curricular opportunities are satisfactory and English makes a good contribution to the personal development of the pupils. Teachers are well deployed, work well together and morale is high. The quality of teaching is monitored and teachers benefit from good professional development opportunities. Pupils' progress is assessed well and the knowledge is well used for the guidance of individual pupils. Assessment is less well used in the planning of lessons to meet the needs of pupils with a wide range of capabilities. Accommodation is good and the climate for learning is orderly and positive.
63. The subject has made unsatisfactory improvement overall since the last inspection as issues raised were not effectively addressed, but there has been good improvement over

the last year. Better teaching means that standards are improving at all ages, and the potential exists for further improvement.

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

64. Low levels of literacy skills limit progress and depress standards.
65. Vocabulary skills are taught with differing degrees of success in different subjects and sometimes within the same subject. In history, key words which are on display for pupils are insufficiently referred to by teachers who at other times check well to verify that technical terms are understood. Literacy is a key element in lesson planning in geography as part of the subject's endorsement of the Key Stage Three Strategy. Technical vocabulary is taught in science and in ICT. English lessons routinely emphasise correct grammatical terms and expect pupils to understand the function of different parts of speech.
66. Limited speaking and listening skills restrict group work and limit investigative activities like role-play. The majority of lessons rely most heavily on teacher-led question and answer sessions. In English lessons, teachers increasingly ask for evidence or quotation to support points as pupils get older, but searching follow-up questions are rarely asked of the same pupil. In a Year 9 ICT lesson, pupils discussed designs for a presentation and at the end could sum up what they had learned from the task. Good teaching in a Year 9 careers lesson taught good skills of listening to and cooperating with other pupils to compare ideas. Teachers use standard English but sometimes accept more colloquial expressions in pupils' answers.
67. Reading skills do not develop as well as speaking and listening skills, but good practice was seen in many areas. Oral skills are particularly well taught in geography and pupils are encouraged to read aloud and are enthusiastic about doing so. The library is too small for a school of this size, but it is well used. Year 7 pupils have library lessons for private reading and for learning research skills. Pupils keep a reading record. English teachers are good role models when reading to their classes. They encourage pupils of all capabilities to volunteer to read aloud, but were not heard correcting mistakes or suggesting improvements. Year 7 tutor time is used very well to promote reading, with three sessions per week in which they read privately, listen to their tutor read a class story or read aloud to their tutor. In English, pupils learn to read characters in complex moral and ethical situations. In history, pupils learn to read for bias. Pupils in media studies are taught to remember that written and visual media are produced with a specific audience and a commercial purpose in mind.
68. Writing skills develop less quickly than other skills. Good practice exists but was less evident than in other areas like vocabulary and speaking. Story-board exercises and simple writing frames to structure writing are used effectively in Year 7 geography lessons. Often, spider diagrams and mind mapping exercises stimulate ideas without suggesting the best structure for written work. Older pupils make satisfactory progress with their writing in English coursework, but poor writing, especially of boys, accounts for poor GCSE results in history.
69. The school makes satisfactory provision for pupils for whom English is an additional language. At the time of the inspection the school identified twelve pupils in this category, and most of them benefit from being bi-lingual. Most of these pupils need no direct

language support and achieve as well as other pupils of their age and capability. Appropriate support is given as required; the very small number who are at an early stage of learning English receive one-to-one support for four hours per week. The teacher responsible works closely with the special needs co-ordinator in the organisation of support assistants in lessons, but the pupils' needs are thought of separately and designated funding is used appropriately. The school recognises the language heritage of pupils and encourages them to take GCSE qualifications in their own language. As a positive measure to ensure that pupils of all ethnic backgrounds achieve as well as they can the school has identified a group of Afro-Caribbean pupils, mostly boys in Years 10 and 11, and has employed an Afro-Caribbean Achievement Teacher to work with them in science and mathematics lessons for three days a week. This is an imaginative arrangement, which is working well.

70. Low levels of literacy skills limit progress and depress standards. The co-ordination of a whole school approach has been historically inadequate. The Literacy Working Group, which consisted of members from all subjects, lost key members because of staff turnover, and together this has hampered progress. The Literacy Policy has not yet been reviewed, but current management procedures are addressing this weakness. The school recognises the importance of improving the reading and writing skills of all pupils, especially of boys. The relative underachievement of boys at GCSE in subjects where language skills are central, like English, English literature, drama, media studies and history is one area that the school has to address, but low levels of literacy affect both boys and girls in all subjects. Good developments to improve literacy teaching have been introduced. These have derived mainly from the National Literacy Strategy, the National Strategies for Teaching at Key Stage 3 and have become part of the school's recommended lesson-planning model, and are beginning to have a positive effect and it is essential that this process is given even more momentum.

## **MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES**

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

## **MAIN STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES**

- Attainment has risen across all year groups.
- Teaching and learning are good.
- ICT is not used sufficiently.
- Pupils are not always aware of their level of work in each skill area.
- Leadership and management are effective in promoting improvement.

## Commentary

71. Standards have risen since the last inspection and are currently above average by Years 9 and 11 in relation to national expectations for pupils' ages. In the last inspection, pupils' attainment was close to national standards by the age of 14 but below national standards in both French and German by the age of 16. In 2003, GCSE results in French and German were above the national average in German and below in French, but in both languages exceeded expectations based on pupils' prior attainment. Over one third of the pupils entered for French and over a half in German gained A\* to C grades. Achievement was good, with around one in ten pupils gaining their best grade overall in their foreign language examination and over a quarter A\* to B. There was a significant rise in grades for boys in German but a decline in French and this pattern has continued in 2004.
72. Higher-attaining pupils in Years 10 and 11 show an understanding of grammatical structures and spoken language. They can use a wide range of expressions successfully in their coursework, which they present attractively using word processing in their own time. Where teaching is challenging and expectations are high, pupils of lower capability are motivated to respond with interest and commitment. In Years 7 to 9 pupils make good progress so that by the end of Year 9 many higher-attaining pupils are able to use a range of tenses in extended writing tasks and to recall vocabulary in both French and German. In lessons, they are encouraged to work at a more rapid pace. Lower-attaining pupils are gaining confidence to use French in the classroom and are taking pride in their work. They are supported well by their teachers and information on the walls of classrooms, but in the lessons observed, pupils with special needs did not receive support from teaching assistants. Overall, boys and girls were seen to be responding equally positively to well-focused teaching, and achievement is good.
73. Teaching and learning are good in most of the lessons in Years 7 to 11, and in two lessons observed they were very good. In one lesson for French, teaching and learning were unsatisfactory because work set did not meet the differing needs of the pupils, but by far the majority of lessons are well planned and include a variety of activities, often with visual material. Pupils are always made aware of what they are going to learn in the lesson and at the end they are often given the opportunity to check their knowledge and skills. They work well in pairs, listen to recorded material and note main points. Teachers use the foreign language for much of the communication in class and they are skilled in their questioning so that pupils gain confidence in responding. The provision of two foreign language assistants enables pupils to practise their oral work with native speakers. Most pupils behave well in lessons, settle down to work quickly and maintain concentration. Time is mostly used effectively. Pupils are assessed regularly and this enables changes to be made to setting at the end of the year for Years 7 to 9. In Years 10 and 11, adjustments are made to target GCSE grades on the basis of assessments. In marking the work, teachers give good advice about how to improve, but pupils are not always made aware of how they are performing in each of the four skills. Their errors in written French and German are not corrected rigorously.
74. The department is well led and management is effective. Staff work successfully as a team mostly in adjacent rooms, sharing ideas and resources. There are clear policies and schemes of work. Careful management of finances enabled the purchase of motivating course books for both French and German, and these help pupils also to develop an awareness of the cultures of France and Germany. Teachers have

encouraged the use of extra materials to enable independent learning, for example workbooks, revision guides and recorded material. Higher-attaining pupils benefit especially from this. There are indications of a good level of support from parents for language learning. Many pupils are encouraged by the rewards for good work and by the displays of their work in classrooms and corridors. Often this is written work, which has been word-processed as homework. However, pupils do not often have the opportunity to use their ICT skills in lessons and this holds back further improvement and the development of research capabilities. Where it is used with SEN pupils, it has a motivating effect and contributes to progress in learning. Success in examinations and tests features on notice boards by the classrooms, contributing to the growing culture of success within this area of the curriculum. Overall, improvement since the last inspection has been good.

## **MATHEMATICS**

The provision is **satisfactory**. **Good improvement is taking place.**

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Good leadership is improving provision and standards.
- The national strategy is being well used to improve teaching and learning.
- The unsatisfactory attitudes of a minority of pupils, mainly in Year 11, are a barrier to learning and achievement.
- There is not enough use of ICT to support teaching and learning.

### **Commentary**

75. Results in National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 9 in 2003 were well below average, both when compared to all schools nationally and schools with similar prior attainment. Results were similar to those in English and science. Unvalidated results for 2004 show a higher proportion of pupils gaining the nationally expected levels. The standards for the current groups of pupils in Years 7 to 9 reflect the latest test results and are now at the national average. Standards have improved because of better teaching and learning and the policy of supporting targeted pupils to reach the expected level. Improvement also stems from the leadership of the head of department. In GCSE examinations in 2003, standards were well below average with a decline in results since 2000. Standards by Year 11 are consistent with these GCSE results and are well below average. In Year 10, however, standards are higher with a greater proportion of pupils studying the intermediate and higher tier courses leading to the higher GCSE grades.
76. Achievement for the majority of pupils is satisfactory by the time they reach Year 9 and they are attaining expected levels in relation to their earlier attainment. Literacy skills exert a detrimental effect on progress but where teachers use good questioning techniques pupils respond well with their answers, enhancing their achievement. However, a significant minority of boys have unsatisfactory attitudes to learning, which acts as a barrier to their achievement, particularly in Years 10 and 11, and this makes their achievement unsatisfactory overall. Pupils from minority ethnic heritage achieve as well as other pupils. The specific support for Afro-Caribbean pupils provided by an Afro-Caribbean Achievement Teacher is working well. The achievement of pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory overall. Many of these pupils do achieve well when their

identified needs are effectively met but pupils who have behavioural difficulties are not always supported sufficiently.

77. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall. It has improved recently in all years because of the implementation of the approach to lessons found in the national strategy. Lessons now have clear objectives, which are explained to pupils and always begin with an introductory activity. Lesson endings however are not well planned and are not brought to a close with a review of what has been learnt. In a minority of lessons, insufficient attention is given to ensuring that work meets the differing needs of pupils within teaching groups, especially to stretch the more capable pupils. There is some good use of homework, which is targeted at pupils' individual National Curriculum levels and expected GCSE grade. In the better lessons, teachers are skilled in questioning pupils and lead good quality class discussions, which result in pupils thinking about their answers and offering good explanations. These teachers have good relationships with pupils and manage behaviour effectively. In the less successful lessons, teachers have yet to develop effective skills for managing behaviour and ensuring that pupils are involved in learning for the duration of the lesson. There is insufficient use of ICT to support teaching and learning and as a vehicle to drive up standards, but plans are in place to incorporate this into schemes of work.
78. Assessment is satisfactory with some good features. These include identified learning objectives and planned, formal assessments with reviews against predicted levels and grades. The marking of pupils' work is consistently done and supportive, with teachers beginning to give pupils targets for improvement. This is however at an early stage of development and targets refer mainly to the quantity of work and the quality of presentation. In planning teaching this assessment information is not used well enough to ensure the work in lessons is matched to pupils' learning needs.
79. Leadership is good with clear vision based on raising standards. The head of department provides strong leadership and is working well with a committed team of specialist teachers. He has a good understanding of strengths and weaknesses of the department. Teachers are very well supported and challenged to improve their practice. There are good procedures in place to monitor the quality of teaching and learning. Improvement since the last inspection has been unsatisfactory, although the very good gains in the last year have initiated good improvement, and the potential to continue to drive up standards and the quality of teaching and learning.

### **Mathematics across the curriculum**

80. Numeracy standards are below average and the application of a whole school strategy is unsatisfactory.
81. Pupils' competence in mathematics is below average. Whilst the National Numeracy Strategy has been implemented in mathematics lessons there is limited evidence of the use of numeracy in subject areas. This is because the school has not prioritised numeracy across the curriculum as a whole school issue. However, pupils can generally cope with the demands made on their mathematical skills in subjects. For example, in science, most pupils can calculate acceleration accurately where teachers explain and model the work well.

### **SCIENCE**

Provision in science is **satisfactory. It is improving.**

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Standards and achievement are improving.
- The quality of teaching is good overall.
- Pupils are well behaved and fully engaged in most lessons.
- Pupils' skills in science enquiry are lower than they should be.
- The quality of extended writing is unsatisfactory, despite a very good emphasis on understanding key vocabulary.
- The use of ICT is inadequate.

### **Commentary**

82. Results in National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 9 in 2003 were well below the national average for the expected levels for pupils of this age. Their attainment at higher levels was also well below average. The attainment of girls was above that of boys. The progress of pupils from the end of Key Stage 2 in their primary schools was well below that of schools with similar entry levels. Results were similar to those in English and mathematics. In Year 11, results for GCSE were also well below the national average for grades A\*-C and average for grades A\*-G. The attainment of girls was above that of boys. Unvalidated examination results for 2004, and school assessment data, indicate that the trend in standards is rising at both Years 9 and 11. Inspection evidence confirms that pupils' achievement is improving and is now at least satisfactory, and this is helping standards to improve. Pupils identified with special educational needs are achieving satisfactorily. The majority of pupils from minority ethnic heritage are generally working and attaining at the levels expected. The benefits of the support provided by the Afro-Caribbean Achievement Teacher to boys of such heritage is working effectively.
83. Overall, teaching is good, with examples of very good or excellent teaching and learning. Health and safety practices are satisfactory. Teachers are well qualified and enthusiastic, with expertise covering all the disciplines of science. All teachers are aware of the importance of planning well structured lessons; and many examples of lesson ideas promoted by the Key Stage 3 Strategy are used effectively, such as active starters, visual modelling, use of small white boards and investigation planning sheets. Drama and modelling are used well to support understanding of concepts. For example, Year 9 pupils learned about chemical displacement activities by acting as elements in a chemical equation; and Year 7 pupils organised themselves into food chains. The teaching of science enquiry has not been integrated well into all lessons in the past, and is a weakness, which reduces the overall quality of learning to being satisfactory. Pupils in Year 9 and above have not had sufficient practice in enquiry techniques, leading to a backlog of skills to be developed, and this hinders their progress. Year 9 and Year 11 pupils wasted learning time in otherwise good lessons because they did not have the skills to get organised quickly and efficiently for practical work. Pupils are generally too passive and dependent on being told what to do, rather than thinking for themselves. The department has recently introduced a cognitive acceleration course (CASE) to develop thinking skills.
84. Pupils are generally well behaved, fully engaged in learning during lessons and mostly learning well at a good pace. When challenged, they usually rise to it well, as seen, for example, in Year 9, where pupils were encouraged to look beyond simple to more

complex energy transformations. In the most effective lessons, teachers use probing questioning to challenge pupils to extend their thinking. However, in a significant minority of lessons the same objectives apply for all learners and able pupils are not stretched enough, especially in their writing tasks. The weakness in pupils' literacy skills lowers their attainment and achievement. Literacy is good at word level because teachers display key words well and ensure that pupils understand and use science language orally. However, writing is not used enough to develop thinking. Pupils mainly write short answers to questions or copy notes rather than explaining, reporting, analysing, and concluding in their own words. The use of ICT is also underdeveloped and there are not enough ICT resources. Numeracy is well supported. For example in a Year 11 class, most pupils were able to calculate acceleration accurately following good modelling by the teacher.

85. There was no significant difference in the attitudes or achievement of girls and boys and pupils of different ethnicities in lessons. Pupils with special educational needs are well provided with a range of active learning opportunities. Teaching assistant support, where provided, is effective. In a class of Year 11 pupils, whose target grades were G to F, were all on target to gain a pass; they were fully engaged in setting up an investigation, on the effects of acid rain, and contributed well to the initial discussion. Two able technicians provide resources for practical science. However, technician time was barely adequate for the previous level of practical science, and inadequate to support the quality of practical work required to improve the science enquiry experience of pupils.
86. Assessment strategies are still developing in line with whole school expectations. Teachers invariably tell pupils what they should learn in the lesson. However, the quality of marking, feedback and target setting is inconsistent across the department, and too much of it focuses on neatness, layout or completeness rather than science understanding. Teachers rarely set writing tasks for assessment purposes except at the ends of topics, when it is too late to be used to improve pupils' understanding in that topic. Year 7 science logs are useful new additions to support assessment and target setting.
87. The leadership of the department is satisfactory. The head of department is new to the school. She has a clear vision and has identified priorities for development. The environment for learning is satisfactory. Laboratory facilities vary from spacious to quite cramped, but invariably teachers have used display, board space and tidiness to create welcoming and supportive learning environments. Significant improvement has been made in the quality of teaching. However, little has yet been done to tackle the weakness in scientific enquiry, although the overall improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory.

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

Provision for ICT is **satisfactory**. Good improvement is taking place.

## **MAIN STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES**

- Good teaching has resulted in considerable recent improvement in standards, although they remain below average in Year 11.
- National Curriculum statutory requirements are not met.
- Pupil assessment is being effectively developed.

- Leadership is good.

## Commentary

88. The GCSE short course was followed by all students in 2003 but only a minority were entered for the examination and so comparisons with national figures are not viable. Unvalidated short course GCSE results in 2004, taken by all pupils in Year 11, were well below expected levels and below the grades of the pupils in their other subjects. In the present Year 11, standards have improved in relation to GCSE criteria but are still below expected levels, with a backlog of coursework and limited skills in research and design. Almost half of the pupils feel that the subject has low status, as it is a short course and has to be learned in 50 minutes per week. Nevertheless, they are beginning to think more about the analysis of their tasks in class in line with their age group, although they have not yet completed their projects. Their achievement is therefore satisfactory. By Year 9, standards are now above average, and pupils are beginning to consider the purpose of a document when they design it, and are sufficiently familiar with the software to understand the range of possibilities in their implementation. In comparison with their previous work their achievement is good. Girls' attainment is higher than that of boys throughout, as they focus more on the instructions for the task whereas boys tend to do the parts that they enjoy. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well in relation to their capability, while pupils who speak English as an additional language achieve at the same level as other pupils. The only work seen during the inspection is the presentation of information in a variety of forms.
89. Teaching and learning are both good. The recent rise in standards is the result of increased emphasis on thinking, encouraged by teachers' adaptation of Key Stage 3 Strategy materials. They do not yet plan for the needs of different groups except occasionally to provide for the extension of higher attainers, but they support individual needs well through targeted guidance during practical sessions. Where teaching is less strong, teachers find it difficult to motivate some pupils, particularly boys, who sometimes disrupt lessons. In some lessons, teachers mention the need to research, consider issues and purpose, but without enough emphasis and so pupils slip into superficial thinking. Good assessment procedures have recently been put in place but have not yet had time to have a real impact on planning for the needs of groups or individuals. Teachers now mark work thoroughly, giving good feedback on strengths and points for improvement in terms of ICT. Past records are too general to give information for specific planning. They are now improving these by building up a detailed picture of performance for planning purposes to set individual targets.
90. Leadership is good. Leaders have a clear vision for the future role of ICT within the school, both as a subject in its own right and also as a contributory factor to the development of pupils' learning. They have made a good beginning to this through their development of AVCE as part of the move towards a coherent 14-19 curriculum and through recent improvement in resources that are still to take full effect. The department is fully staffed with teachers who have good knowledge of ICT and with enough technical support. The head of department has good knowledge of his department's strengths and areas for improvement. Management is satisfactory. There is good assistance to new staff with regular departmental meetings to share good practice and support for new entrants. Technicians are well deployed to support lessons in case of problems of access to computers. There are good specialist rooms with sufficient computers for

pupils to work individually. However, the management of assessment has not yet developed to the point where it can be used effectively to promote learning.

91. The curriculum does not meet statutory requirements as pupils have no entitlement to experience of using IT to control events, but is improving in that the focus on developing pupils' thinking is raising standards throughout the school. The department makes a good contribution to moral and social education through paired working and presentations, through using contexts for presentations that ask pupils to consider moral issues from two points of view. Improvement since the previous inspection is good in that the department has analysed its weaknesses and acted to improve accommodation, resources, technical support, marking and curriculum, although assessment is still not being used to plan for raising standards.

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

92. The use of ICT across the curriculum is unsatisfactory.
93. The school has clear vision for the future place of ICT in helping pupils to learn.
94. The coordination of ICT across the curriculum is unsatisfactory, with too little monitoring of subjects to check the extent to which they are meeting the demands of their statutory curriculum. There is little co-ordination between ICT and other departments to establish the capability needs of pupils at particular points in their courses. As a result, there is some use but weakness in almost all subjects, with heavy emphasis on word-processing and Internet searches. The pupils' experience of data logging is very superficial, but they do have some demonstrations and analyse data. ICT is used very well in music.
95. There is a clear vision within the school improvement plan for the place of ICT in developing strategies to help pupils to learn. The access to resources has been inhibited by long-term technical problems but a new system, using the most modern approaches, has recently been commissioned. This includes interactive whiteboards and a wireless system. The potential now exists to remedy weaknesses in access to ICT components.

## **HUMANITIES**

### **GEOGRAPHY**

Provision in geography is **good**.

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

- Good teaching leads to pupils' good achievement, and is raising standards in Years 10 and 11.
- Opportunities for fieldwork in Years 7 to 9 are limited, and the use of ICT is underdeveloped.
- Leadership and management are good.

#### **Commentary**

96. GCSE results in 2003 were well below the national average but the small numbers choosing to study geography in Years 10 and 11 and their overall low prior attainment in

the subject make comparison with national averages difficult. Four of the twenty candidates attained grade C. In 2004 11 of the 24 gained at least grade C; all but a few low capability pupils reached or exceeded the school's expectation when they started the course. In the past two years, no pupils have attained the highest grades, A\* or A. The work of pupils in Year 10 and 11 indicates that standards are more in line with the national expectations for their age. Overall, the prior attainment of these pupils is higher and they are achieving well because of good teaching and their positive attitude.

97. Standards are low on entry to the school and teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 indicate that standards are below the national expectations for the age of the pupils. This is confirmed by inspection evidence in Years 7 to 9, although achievement is good. Pupils' achievement ranged from satisfactory in a Year 8 class, in which the poor behaviour of a small number of boys limited the progress of other pupils, to very good in lessons in which firm control and brisk pace kept pupils on task throughout the lesson. The only difference in the achievement of different groups of pupils throughout Years 7 to 11 is that the achievement of some lower-attaining boys is less than good because of their poor attitudes.
98. Teaching and learning are good and were very good in half of the lessons. This is because the teachers' enthusiasm is passed on to the pupils, question and answer sessions ensured that all pupils were involved, and strong classroom management enabled active learning, often in groups. Teachers structure lessons into well-planned stages and organise resources well. Emphasis is placed on developing pupils' thinking skills; for example, a sorting exercise to illustrate the growth of Spurn Head coastal spit, and a ranking exercise considering the attitudes of people who are prepared to live in tectonic danger zones. Plenary sessions are well used, sometimes including pupils' own assessment of how they have learned. Support by a teaching assistant was seen in only one lesson and her role was to work with a single pupil. However, teachers have a very good knowledge of individual pupils' needs, even early in the term, and focus in-class support appropriately. Marking is thorough and helpful, and the procedures being implemented for assessing and monitoring pupils' progress are good, although, as they have only been recently introduced, overall assessment is only satisfactory.
99. Leadership and management are good. The head of humanities and head of geography have embraced developments from the Key Stage 3 Strategy to provide a wider range of teaching and learning styles. The geography teachers work closely together. Good use is made of the spacious accommodation and display areas. Too little use is made of fieldwork to stimulate pupils' interests and to support their learning, although opportunities in GCSE coursework are well devised and provide a good challenge for higher-attaining pupils. Pupils in Years 7 to 9 do not have a wide enough experience of first-hand measuring and recording of data. There is inadequate use of ICT but good plans exist to develop its use. ICT is used well by pupils for research and presentation but so far spreadsheets are not used until GCSE coursework. The subject promotes pupils' literacy well and makes good use of their numerical and graphical skills. Overall, improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory. There has been a marked improvement in the quality of teaching and in the variety of work in the classroom, but less fieldwork.

## HISTORY

The overall provision in history is **satisfactory, but improving**.

## **MAIN STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES**

- GCSE results are below national averages.
- Teaching and learning are good.
- There is insufficient use of ICT.
- Leadership and management of the subject are good.

## Commentary

100. Pupils' achievement is satisfactory as they enter the school with standards below expectations for their age. GCSE Results in 2003 were below national averages. Provisional results for 2004 show that a higher proportion of pupils were successful in their examination. Girls out perform boys, but not significantly so. However, standards remain below average at the end of Years 9 and 11, and are depressed by the limitations in pupils' literacy skills, especially for boys. Some good instances of pupils reading aloud were observed and classrooms have key words displayed, but these are not consistently used. Many pupils experience difficulty in retaining information, sometimes being unable to recall work done recently, limiting their achievement. Concentration on how to answer examination questions and revision techniques are being used appropriately to raise achievement in Years 10 and 11. Most pupils have a good grasp of chronology and can handle sources of evidence satisfactorily. This was shown in a Year 9 lesson, where pupils were able to construct competent answers to questions on the life of slaves in 18<sup>th</sup> Century American plantations from several sources.
101. Teaching and learning are good, and are beginning to have a positive influence on pupils' achievement. Lessons are well planned and expectations of pupils are good. Classes are well managed and pupils respond with good attitudes towards the subject. Teaching is effective in challenging pupils to think about historical and moral issues. A good example of this was seen in a Year 10 lesson, where pupils were asked to consider the actions of those involved in the Sharpeville Massacre of 1960. Pupils responded well, discussing effectively the different motives of those involved. Pupils with special needs have good support from teachers and make at least satisfactory progress. There is limited classroom assistance for these pupils. The scheme of assessment has been recently developed and is satisfactory, but is not fully applied to the individual development of all pupils. However, ICT is not used effectively enough to support pupils' literacy development and their learning through research.
102. Leadership and management are good. There is a clear vision and direction for the subject. All schemes of work have been thoroughly revised. The examination syllabus has been replaced to make it more relevant to the pupils. There are regular departmental meetings and consultation. The monitoring and evaluation of teaching, criticised in the last report, is satisfactory. One effective recent innovation has been the institution of an annual Year 10 visit to the battlefields of France and Belgium, which not only strengthened historical knowledge, but also increased the moral awareness of pupils and assisted their social development. Improvement since the last inspection is good. The work of the department has been effectively overhauled and is now more appropriate to the pupils, who are more engaged with it. Overall, standards are improving, but are not yet reflected in results.

## Religious education

Provision in religious education is **unsatisfactory**.

## Main strengths and weaknesses

- Religious education is not being provided for pupils in Years 10 and 11 in accordance with the Hertfordshire Agreed Syllabus.

- Teachers lack the necessary specialist knowledge to teach about religious traditions accurately.
- Some of the teachers have good general teaching skills that ensure good class management and offer pupils a variety of engaging learning opportunities.
- Assessment is at an early stage of development and is not yet reliable, or helpful to pupils.

## Commentary

103. Pupils arrive in the school with little knowledge and understanding of religious traditions. The learning of many pupils, throughout Years 7, 8 and 9 is impeded by difficulties with reading, writing and contributing orally in lessons. However, a greater impediment to their learning is the failure of the school to provide them with high quality religious education. The result is that by the end of Year 9 pupils have achieved little and are still below the standard of attainment expected by the Hertfordshire Agreed Syllabus. In Years 10 and 11 some religious education is provided within a General Studies course but this fails to cover the material required by the Agreed Syllabus, so by the end of Year 11 pupils' knowledge and understanding of religions remain below the expectations of that syllabus and their achievement in this subject, over their time in the school, has been unsatisfactory.
104. Teaching and learning are both unsatisfactory. Religious education is taught by a number of teachers. None of these is a trained, specialist teacher of the subject, leading to teaching that is sometimes significantly inaccurate, and that fails to enthuse pupils in their learning. Lessons are often overly reliant on the use of a class textbook that requires reading skills beyond the capabilities of some pupils. The scheme of work, currently in a state of transition, does not provide well for pupils to develop their knowledge and understanding of religious traditions. In the best lessons, teachers plan conscientiously, use a range of learning activities, and create a good atmosphere within their classrooms. They use a range of strategies to provide for the learning needs of all pupils. However, in other lessons the planning and activities used are not effective enough, and class management is only satisfactory. Marking is encouraging but does not yet give pupils a clear understanding of what they need to do to improve.
105. Leadership and management are both unsatisfactory. There is a failure to understand the possibilities of the subject and there is no clear vision of how it could be developed. The day-to-day management of the subject is good. There is monitoring and evaluation by senior staff through performance management approaches. However, neither the head of the Humanities faculty or the teacher responsible for religious education, have the opportunity to monitor the teaching of those teachers whose main subject is not within the Humanities faculty. There is inadequate subject-specific assessment of pupils when they arrive in the school, and the shortcomings of the current assessment arrangements, prevent accurate tracking of pupils' progress through the school. Although a number of the points made in the last report have begun to be addressed, progress since the last inspection is unsatisfactory.

## TECHNOLOGY

### Design and technology

Provision in design and technology is **satisfactory and improving**.

## Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are rising, and pupils achieve well in practical lessons.
- Teaching and learning are good.
- The curriculum does not meet statutory requirements and is limited by the lack of resources.
- Good leadership is initiating improvement and driving up standards and achievement.

## Commentary

106. Standards for the majority of pupils at the end of Year 9 are below average and, by the end of Year 11, they are well below the average expected for pupils of a similar age. In GCSE examinations in 2003, results at A\*-C were very low and at A\*-G well below the national averages. However, unvalidated figures in 2004, show a slight pattern for improvement. There was little difference between the performance of boys and girls. Nevertheless, pupils still did not perform as well in this subject as they did in other subjects.
107. Pupils' achievement by the end of Year 9 is satisfactory. They have a sound understanding of different materials and processes and they use specialist equipment competently and safely. The highest achievers understand the purpose of a specification for a product and use this to evaluate their work. Although all pupils persevere very well in most lessons, especially if they are practical ones, lower-achieving pupils are limited by their weak literacy and numeracy skills. The limitations of ICT resources inhibit pupils' progress. By the end of Year 11, pupils' achievement is unsatisfactory. Pupils' designs do not show clear development and their research is often superficial. The attitude of a significant minority of pupils, particularly boys, is poor and their learning is not secure. Year 10 pupils, however, apply themselves well to tasks, for example, when working in production teams to make toys for children.
108. Teaching and learning are good. There has been a complete change of staff in the department over the last year. Teachers have good subject knowledge and share this well. Pupils enjoy the lessons. The reasons they give relate to the use of specialist equipment to learn useful new skills and having some control over their work. Teachers manage lessons safely and competently. Lessons are well structured and there is a good pace to the learning in most of them. In occasional lessons that are only satisfactory, the learning that is planned relates to the completion of tasks, rather than the level of learning intended. Nevertheless, pupils enjoy the creativity involved, for example in inventing a board game, and apply themselves well. The majority of teachers make very effective use of questioning to challenge and extend pupils' thinking. In the best lessons, individual needs are clearly identified and addressed. Some teachers provide excellent opportunities for pupils to work collaboratively, sharing tasks and evaluating their progress at the end of lessons. This improves pupils' social skills and their attitudes to learning very effectively. There are clear procedures for behaviour management and pupils understand that there are consequences attached to undesirable behaviour. Lessons provide many opportunities to reinforce literacy and numeracy. However, teachers have few strategies or materials for targeting and improving pupils' weak learning skills, except by one-to-one support. Although extension activities are occasionally planned for higher-achieving pupils, these are insufficiently challenging or exciting to encourage pupils to take advantage of them. Technicians, particularly in food,

support pupils' learning very well. Sixth form students support the work of Year 9 pupils effectively in some lessons. Assessment is satisfactory. Pupils' work is regularly marked. Pupils receive high levels of verbal feedback in most lessons. Pupils are informed about end of project assessments and their levels. However, assessments are not sufficiently well linked to the intended learning outcomes identified in lesson plans. The data on pupils' achievement is not always used effectively to modify lesson plans or evaluate pupils' progress. All the staff have been appointed during the previous year and the differences in the approaches of different teachers have not yet been harmonised. In a few lessons, the activities do not always meet the preferred learning styles of pupils. As a result, pupils are passive when the teaching is directive, and the buzz of enjoyment that is found where there is a more collaborative approach is missing. Homework is set and marked, but it is not yet established as a routine.

109. The head of department joined the school only one term ago and is providing good leadership. Although schemes of work have been revised, there has been insufficient time to establish a coherent curriculum for Years 7 to 9. Additionally, the monitoring routines to ensure continuous improvement are not well established. Management is, therefore, satisfactory. Nevertheless, appropriate priorities have been identified and there is an action plan for raising achievement. The curriculum is unsatisfactory as it does not meet statutory requirements with respect to ICT because there is no computer-aided control and manufacture or control. Links with industry are unsatisfactory. As a consequence, there is insufficient work on modern methods and trends in engineering and product manufacturing, for example, electronics and communications. The curriculum does not show that pupils are expected to solve increasingly complex design problems as they move from one year to the next. Although the accommodation is satisfactory in terms of space, it is dated in many areas. Resources are unsatisfactory. Despite considerable disruption due to staff changes, improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory.

## VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

The main foci for the inspection were art and design, drama and music. Media studies was sampled, and most pupils start the course with a limited knowledge of the world of media. Results in GCSE examinations were below average. Standards are below average by the end of Year 11, although pupils' achievement is satisfactory. Teaching and learning are satisfactory as the pupils' differing needs are not always well met in the mixed capability classes. The quality of work is often influenced by the limited literacy skills of many pupils. They experience difficulty when asked to evaluate their course work, often simply describing the activities, rather than identifying and writing about the strengths and areas for development. Inadequate use is made of ICT to support presentation and the development of pupils' knowledge, understanding and skills. Although pupils have visited the British film institute, there are too few chances for pupils to visit commercial media organisations, to extend their wider knowledge of the world of media. Leadership and management are satisfactory.

### Art and design

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

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Leadership and management are unsatisfactory, and not enough has been done since the previous inspection to raise standards.
- Teaching and learning are unsatisfactory overall, and in Years 7 to 9 pupils' achievement is unsatisfactory.
- Assessment procedures do not inform pupils well enough about how they might improve their work.

### Commentary

110. Leadership and management are unsatisfactory. Internal reviews of the work of the department, and development planning for the future, are not sharp enough. Recent support from senior managers has been beneficial, and standards, and the quality of teaching and learning, are beginning to improve in Years 10 and 11. However, this improved practice has not yet been adopted over the whole department, and not enough has been done to improve standards since the last inspection. Improvement is therefore unsatisfactory.
111. Standards by Year 9 are well below national expectations. Pupils' achievement is unsatisfactory, because they do not make enough progress in gaining skills, knowledge and understanding in this subject. Their work in chalk and charcoal is vigorous, and they use bold contrasting tones when they draw from everyday objects such as bottles and plants. They also use colour freely, creating attractive still life paintings in bright reds and yellows. However, most pupils' skills in drawing and painting are weak, and they do not use ICT often enough to fully support and extend their work.
112. In the GCSE examinations in 2003, results were very low. Most pupils did much worse in their art and design than in their other subjects. Unvalidated results for 2004 show that pupils attained higher standards. Standards by Year 11 are below those expected nationally. Pupils' achievement is satisfactory, and they make sound gains in the subject considering their low starting points when they begin the course in Year 10. Portraits are

lively and imaginative, and higher-attaining pupils often capture a good likeness in their paintings and drawings. Landscape work shows a growing knowledge of 20<sup>th</sup> century art movements, such as Impressionism and Expressionism, and sound composition skills. Pupils also use tissue paper and glue to recreate the rich textures seen in rocks and fossils. However, whilst sketchbooks are lively and vigorous, ideas are not always fully realised, and pupils' experimental work does not always feature strongly enough in their larger scale work. Pupils from minority ethnic groups achieve as well as other pupils. The achievement of pupils with special educational needs is unsatisfactory in Years 7 to 9 because teaching does not take sufficient account of their differing needs, and satisfactory in Years 10 and 11.

113. Teaching and learning are unsatisfactory overall. In Years 7 to 9, tasks are not always challenging enough, and pupils' folders are not organised well enough for them to build effectively on their previous work. In addition, pupils' knowledge and understanding of their standards is weak, and they are not sure what they need to do to improve. These factors restrict learning to an unsatisfactory level. In Years 10 and 11, teaching and learning are satisfactory. Efforts have been made to improve teaching quality in these years, by organising projects well, and by improving pupils' knowledge of how well they are doing. These efforts have been successful, and have laid a secure foundation for further improvement.

## **DRAMA**

Provision in drama is **satisfactory**.

### **MAIN STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES**

- Pupils in Years 7 to 9 have a limited understanding of discrete drama strategies and techniques to support them in their learning.
- Pupils in Years 10 and 11 have a limited understanding of how to explore their practical work from different perspectives and points of view.
- Pupils' written work is influenced by the weakness in literacy skills.
- Examples of good and very good teaching promote pupils' learning.
- Pupils are generally provided with an imaginative curriculum.

### **Commentary**

114. Pupils enter Year 7 with a limited knowledge of drama and role-play. They make satisfactory progress, and standards at the end of Year 9 are in line with those expected of pupils of a similar age. Achievement is satisfactory. Pupils in Year 7 make satisfactory progress in developing their skills as they explore the use of mime within an imaginative range of drama games and improvisations. Many pupils in Year 9 are developing effective improvisational skills linked to their study of a piece of scripted drama. Although pupils develop satisfactory improvisational skills, discussions revealed that they have a limited understanding of discrete skills and strategies; for example, hot-seating, thought-tracking and forum theatre, to support them in their learning. Pupils in Years 7 to 9 enjoy their lessons and work well together. Occasionally, the disruptive behaviour of a small minority of boys impacted both on their own learning and that of others.
115. The subject is a popular GCSE option, though it does not necessarily draw on the most academic pupils. Whilst many pupils make satisfactory progress, overall standards at the

end of Year 11 are below average in relation to the expectations for the course. This was reflected in the GCSE results in 2003, when standards were below, and for many pupils well below, average. Results in the most recent unconfirmed 2004 GCSE examinations were broadly the same.

116. Standards at the end of Year 11 are below national expectations, and are adversely influenced by the below average literacy skills of a number of pupils. This could be seen in the scrutiny of work, with many pupils focusing on describing the activities they had been involved in, rather than evaluating their strengths and areas for development. Pupils in Year 10 made good progression in a very good lesson on the use of masks and mime in the creation of character. Similarly, pupils in Year 11 made effective progress as they worked in groups in interpreting a script, though not all pupils found this task easy. Whilst pupils make generally satisfactory progress in their practical skills, they have a lack of knowledge as to how they can improve the quality of their work, through the exploration and application of the working methods of influential directors and theatre practitioners. Nevertheless, achievement is satisfactory across all year groups and for pupils of differing capabilities and ethnic heritage.
117. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory, with some good and very good examples being observed. Lessons are well planned, organised and managed, with teachers providing pupils with the chance to take part in some imaginative drama activities. Chances are given for pupils to perform their work to each other and to evaluate each other's efforts. The taught curriculum provides the pupils in all year groups with many opportunities, which hold their interest. It is a very imaginative curriculum, and makes a positive contribution to pupils' moral, social and cultural development.
118. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Both during his time at the school, and the comparatively short time he has been responsible for the subject, the teacher in charge has put into place good schemes of work and other documentation to support teaching. Pupils are given the chance to take part in annual productions, with pupils in Year 11 presenting their examination work to an audience of parents, teachers and friends. There was no discrete drama report at the last inspection and there can be no secure judgment on improvement in standards. However, the better overall provision is a clear development.

## **MUSIC**

Provision in music is **satisfactory and improving**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Standards are rising, due to the good leadership of the department.
- Good teaching motivates most pupils to learn well.
- Pupils' achievement is held back by the behaviour of a small number of pupils.
- Inconsistency in linking the activities of composing, performing and listening in some lessons limits the pace of pupils' achievement.

### **Commentary**

119. Aggregated results in GCSE for 2003 were very low: only one in five pupils obtained passes with a C grade or higher. A similar picture is apparent in unvalidated results for

2004. In Year 11, standards are well below average compared with pupils of the same age nationally, but in Year 10 they are below average. This improving trend is largely due to the skilled leadership of the department. Low levels of instrumental skill hold many pupils back from higher achievement. Pupils do not relate sound and notation confidently. Boys have a wider range of attainment than girls, but no less interest. Attitudes are good. In Year 9, standards are well below the levels expected nationally. Few grasp characteristics of different styles of music well. They recognise instrumental sounds well, but do not use technical vocabulary well to describe and evaluate what they hear. Higher-attaining pupils create short compositions in up to four co-ordinated parts well using ICT, and combine chords and melody at keyboards. Pupils' achievement in Years 7 to 9 is satisfactory overall. In Years 7 and 8, achievement is better than Year 9, where unsatisfactory behaviour of a minority of pupils, mainly boys, impacts adversely on achievement. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress, achieving well where lessons have a practical slant, but not receiving enough support in writing.

120. Although teaching is good across all years, learning is only satisfactory in Years 7 to 9. The best lessons articulate pupils' musical responses in a variety of ways: through movement, discussion, competition and practical work. They are well structured, enjoyable and motivating, helping to break down a culture where careful listening does not come easily. Relations between pupils and teachers are mostly very good, built on mutual respect, even when some pupils' behaviour detracts from learning. Language skills are well taught orally, but less well followed up through written work and marking. Pupils receive insufficient guidance on how to improve. In some lessons, the key skills of composing, performing and appraising music are not rigorously connected, limiting pupils' ability to reason about music. Group and individual presentations build pupils' confidence, but insufficient participation of the 'audience' limits the impact of such activity. Homework gives too little attention to developing continuity between lessons. Learning is good in Years 10 and 11. Pupils work well with little supervision, aware of what is expected of them, and enjoy their work.
121. Through clear vision and knowledgeable leadership of the subject, the departmental head has done much to turn around negative attitudes to the subject in two years. The numbers taking the GCSE option are growing. The sixth form BTEC music technology course links well to the GCSE course, encouraging pupils to see the vocational worth of the subject. Visiting instrumental teachers contribute to the running of a number of extra-curricular activities. The proportion of pupils learning instruments corresponds to the national average. Management is satisfactory. Whilst target grades are set for GCSE, they are not always useful enough because they are not sufficiently specific to enhance pupil achievement. Strategies to improve learning by monitoring and evaluation of lessons are underdeveloped. Good opportunities are developed for school performances. Since the last inspection there has been satisfactory improvement. Standards have dipped significantly, but are now rising again. Investment in modern technology is impacting positively on standards, with the curriculum for 14-19 year-olds being coherently planned around these good resources.

## PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Provision in physical education is **satisfactory and improving**.

## MAIN STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

- Standards reached by boys are higher than girls.
- Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall.
- Good behaviour, discipline and participation impacts positively on standards.
- The work of the department contributes positively to the whole school ethos.
- Strong leadership of the department has the potential to raise standards further.

### Commentary

122. Standards are average and reflect expectations of the National Curriculum across all areas at both ages 14 and 16 overall; this represents satisfactory achievement. Standards and achievement of pupils with special educational needs and those from ethnic minorities are satisfactory. A significant minority of girls underachieve and do not reach standards expected. Boys are strong on competitive sport where they have notable success, especially in rugby. Girls are strong in dance. A significant number of boys and a small minority of girls play for local clubs and other prestigious teams. Although improving, fewer girls develop their potential in games. This is because the department has not fully recovered from the negative impact of the loss of key staff in 2001 and extra-curricular provision for girls is still building up. In 2003, GCSE examination results were well below national averages but are closer in the unvalidated results for 2004. Improvements in the last three years have not yet restored standards to the level reported at the time of the last inspection.
123. Teaching and learning is satisfactory with some good features. No unsatisfactory lessons were seen. Good discipline ensures that pupils learn in a safe environment, develop good basic skills and, in most lessons, learn new work. Even when teaching out of their specialist areas, teachers draw on other expertise for support, such as sixth formers, and this ensures that practical work is consistently modelled to a good standard. Most pupils enjoy lessons and are fully engaged. This is not only due to the enthusiasm of teachers, but also to their capability to vary tasks and to make learning fun. In one inspirational lesson, pupils achieved levels of work better than expected and this was down to excellent planning and using a wide variety of exciting and relevant stimuli. Although satisfactory, work is not always best planned to meet the needs of all pupils, particularly special educational needs and gifted and talented pupils. For example, in theory lessons, the work set for boys is not modified sufficiently to cope with their poor literacy skills. Teacher assessment is insufficiently accurate and information is used randomly to inform teaching and learning. This is because the work of the department is not monitored closely enough. Most pupils respect and value their teachers' hard work and respond by behaving well, participating well in lessons, attending extra-curricular activities and maintaining a very good standard of kit. The effect of these positive attitudes permeates the life of the school.
124. Leadership is good and management satisfactory. Since the last inspection, improvement has been unsatisfactory, although in the last year it has shown good improvement. Priorities to arrest the decline in standards and to turn the department around are now correctly identified. Good quality schemes of work are now in place. Extra-curricular provision for boys is strong and contributes significantly to standards attained. Lack of written guidance for teachers leads to inconsistencies in practices. Insufficient opportunities to develop pupils' information and communication technology skills are due to inaccessibility of computers. The need for risk assessments was

identified in the last report but they are not yet consistently applied. The department is successfully working on involving pupils in their learning. With continued effective leadership and collaborative strategic planning, this strong team of teachers has the potential to raise standards further.

## **BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES**

### **BUSINESS**

The overall provision in business is **satisfactory**.

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

- Standards are in line with the national average at 16, and examination results are rising.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge and enthusiasm.
- Work set does not always meet the differing needs of the pupils.
- Numeracy and ICT are not adequately incorporated into the schemes of work.

#### **Commentary**

125. The school offers GNVQ intermediate in business studies, equivalent to four GCSE A-C grades in Years 10 and 11. The examination results for the last three years have been in line with the national average. The unvalidated results for 2004 show an increase in the number of pupils gaining the higher A-C grades. The number of pupils choosing to study business studies has more than doubled in the last two years.
126. Standards are in line with national expectations. The levels of achievement are satisfactory in Year 11 and good in Year 10. Pupils in Year 10 have good understanding of how business works and develops. They have a good grasp of the main functional areas, such as human resources and finance, and can explain how these contribute to business success. Using their knowledge of business objectives and human resource development, pupils in Year 11 explain the importance of employment contracts for business and individual employees and analyse grounds for lawful and unlawful dismissal. Standards of written portfolio work are well in line with national standards, there are several examples of good work. They show developing skills of investigation, analysis, interpretation and evaluation. Presentation of their material is careful and thorough, although there is inadequate use of ICT to support learning. Overall, girls perform better than boys.
127. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall and impacts positively on pupil learning. It is good in Year 10. In the best lessons, because of the teachers' strong subject knowledge, it translates into stimulating lesson content, good use of time and well-paced activities, with challenging questions and high expectations. Lessons have a real momentum, generating enthusiasm for the subject and motivating pupils. In this positive environment pupils learn well and make good progress. The standard of their written work reflects this motivation. Teaching in Year 11, though based on equally good subject knowledge, does not manage to maintain this momentum, expectations are less robust, the pace and content of lessons flags and although the quality of teaching is satisfactory, learning though positive had slowed at the start of the autumn term. The range of learning opportunities are sometimes not well matched to pupils' differing needs. Strategies incorporated into lesson planning do not ensure that all pupils can learn and progress to

develop their potential. Marking is thorough, with good feedback to pupils so they know how to improve their grades. Resources are insufficient to support effective learning, pupils do not even have a basic textbook provided by the school.

128. The overall quality of leadership and management is satisfactory. This is a well run department with several good features. There is a well integrated, highly committed and hard working team of new staff working hard to raise standards. Good assessment strategies monitor pupil progress and parents are also kept fully informed. The vocational curriculum is well developed and demanding, but there is no provision for pupils wishing to take a single GCSE in business studies rather than the more specialised vocational qualification equivalent to four GCSEs. The department does not have a medium term action plan with defined priorities and objectives for the subject. Numeracy and ICT are not adequately incorporated into the schemes of work.

## **HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE**

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

## **MAIN STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES**

- Pupils' achievement is good.
- Teaching and learning are good; active tasks make learning enjoyable.
- Clear guidance on how to improve their work, and coursework clinics are major factors in the pupils' success.
- Good relationships and class control promote good attitudes to work.
- Pupils have insufficient access to ICT in lessons.

## **COMMENTARY**

129. Results are regularly amongst the highest in the school; for many pupils it is their best subject. In 2003, GNVQ results were well above the national average, and unvalidated results for 2004 show that all who completed the course gained grades A\* to C at GCSE. Current standards on Year 11 courses leading to GNVQ at intermediate and foundation levels are in line with those expected for the qualifications.
130. Achievement is good. Several pupils begin the course with below or well below average starting points, and weak spelling and literacy. Pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds generally achieve in line with others in the group, but a few contribute less in class. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well, and sometimes very well, because of the good support they receive from teachers and coursework clinics. Pupils have good subject knowledge and use specialised vocabulary confidently. They speak and write knowledgeably about child development, healthy eating and life styles, using specialist vocabulary appropriately, but a significant minority retain weak spelling and do not regularly use spelling aids.
131. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Pupils enjoy the good variety of learning styles: games, discussions in pairs and groups, independent research and brainstorming. Teachers help students develop study skills. They share their good subject knowledge effectively and help pupils learn through good questioning. They make their expectations of behaviour and work clear, so that pupils are attentive and participate well. Lesson objectives are explained. Learning is well consolidated. A slick pace in

several lessons keeps pupils on their toes and aids lively participation. Work is carefully assessed and marked, with clear guidance on how to improve, followed up by coursework clinics.

132. Health and social care makes a satisfactory contribution to developing pupils' literacy through speaking, reading, a little formal letter writing and much extended writing. It makes some contribution to numeracy, for example measuring height and weight, but includes fewer interpretations of graphs or tables than normally found on vocational courses. Accommodation and resources, other than access to ICT in class, are satisfactory. Years 10 and 11 are taught a very small proportion of lessons in the single room with computers available and sometimes this time is used to copy hand-written drafts, which represents poor use of learning time.
133. Leadership is satisfactory and management good. Courses attract good numbers, for example 40 in Year 10, but few boys. The recent initiative, to start the course at the end of Year 9 and to include an ambitious holiday task to form part of the first piece of coursework is paying dividends. At this early stage of the course, pupils are producing work of above average standards; virtually all gained a merit or distinction in their first coursework assignment. A good course guide ensures that all are aware of requirements. The lack of double period lessons in Year 10 hinders visits to work places. Planning resources for new courses is handicapped by the lack of a known financial allocation for health and social care. The last report did not report in detail on health and social care.

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

Personal social and health education was sampled and citizenship was inspected in full. **The personal, social and health education programme** supports the pupils' personal development and covers aspects of sex education and drugs awareness. It is well linked to careers advice through work-related learning, and other aspects of support and guidance. It is also augmented by the provision for citizenship.

### **CITIZENSHIP**

The quality of provision in citizenship **is satisfactory**.

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

- Pupils are becoming well-informed citizens through acquiring a good knowledge and understanding of issues.
- Procedures for assessing pupils' progress are inadequate.
- There is an effective school council elected by all pupils.
- There are insufficient opportunities for all pupils to take part in school and community based activities.

#### **Commentary**

134. All pupils in Years 7 to 11 follow a course in citizenship, which covers the National Curriculum during designated lessons. There is no formal attempt to link topics, which may be part of the curriculum in other subjects. However, in some lessons in Year 11,

teachers are able to make links with other subjects and examination work. There are no national standards against which attainment in this subject can be judged, however pupils' standards are broadly in line with those expected for pupils at the end of Year 9 and Year 11. By the end of Year 9, pupils have an understanding of the electoral process, supported by elections for the effective school council. They are developing understanding of taxes, local government and human rights. By Year 11, pupils have developed an understanding of laws and how they relate to their lives.

135. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. In the best lessons, the teaching is lively and very good emphasis is placed on the development of thinking and study skills. The subject is taught by a team of humanities teachers who are developing expertise in the area. Lessons planned broadly cover the requirements of the National Curriculum, although as yet there are insufficient opportunities for pupils to engage in school or community activities, or to belong to voluntary organisations. Generally, lessons are not planned sufficiently well for those of different capabilities, so that those pupils identified as gifted and talented are not offered sufficient challenge. The lessons planned and work done indicate good progression from Year 7 to Year 11. The assessment and recording system is not yet well enough developed to provide teachers and pupils with a clear picture of the standards they have achieved. However, pupils' work and discussion with them indicate that their achievements are satisfactory.

136. Leadership and management are satisfactory. There is a newly appointed co-ordinator who is monitoring to ensure coverage of the National Curriculum within the designated lessons. She recognises the need to develop assessment and to provide opportunities for pupils to involve themselves in community and voluntary organisations.

## SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM

In the inspection, eight subjects and courses were inspected and reported in detail. Work in 8 other subjects and courses was sampled and contributed to the overall picture of teaching and learning in the school.

Recruitment to the sixth form has been low until this academic year. Entry to the sixth form is open and, as a consequence students' prior attainment is wide. Retention into the second year of GCE courses has not been high and this has resulted in groups which are very small, in some subjects only one candidate was entered for examination. Consequently any comparison with national examination results is unreliable. Thus the tables below which convey comparisons have only been completed where it is deemed that a comparison is significant.

### *Level 3 GCE AS level courses*

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Art and design	3	-	-	-	-	-	-
Biology	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
History	2	-	-	-	-	-	-
ICT	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
Mathematics	1	-	-	-	-	-	-

Other Social studies	4	100	69.7	0.0	16.7	22.56	24.1
Sports/PE studies	1	-	-	-	-	-	-

**Level 3 GCE A-level and VCE courses**

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Art and design	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
Business	15	93.3	65.0	13.3	14.6	72.0	60.1
Biology	4	25	96.4	0.0	39.2	10.0	78.6
Drama	2	-	-	-	-	-	-
English literature	5	60.0	99.5	0.0	46.5	28.0	86.5
French	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
History	2	-	-	-	-	-	-
ICT	2	-	-	-	-	-	-
Mathematics	3	-	-	-	-	-	-
Other Social studies	6	66.7	97.4	16.7	42.7	46.7	81.8
Sports/PE studies	3	-	-	-	-	-	-

**ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION**

The main focus for the inspection was **English**. **French** was sampled. The teaching and learning in French were good. Achievement for the very small minority of students undertaking the course is satisfactory and the standards are broadly in line with expectations.

**ENGLISH**

Provision in English is **good**.

**Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The quality of teaching is very good,
- Students achieve well.
- Good relationships with students in lessons that are interesting and challenging encourage positive responses and a commitment to learn.
- Leadership and management are good.

**Commentary**

137. Results at GCE Advanced Level have fluctuated considerably in recent years, as has the number of students following the AS and A2 courses. In 2002 there were 17 students, in 2003 only five and seven in 2004. In years when the subject has recruited good numbers of students, the results have been in line with the national average. In 2003, the average points score was well below the national figure, and unvalidated figures for 2004 are similar. The fact that students are not normally entered for AS level in Year 12 and in some years the number taking Advanced Level (A2) are small, means comparisons with

national statistics are unreliable. There is no significant difference in the standards achieved by male and female students at this age.

138. Standards in the current Years 12 and 13 confirm that students' achievement is good. There is a wide range of capability in the two Year 12 classes and a minority of students found a metaphysical poem difficult. The Year 12 students are at an early stage of the course when a broad introduction to literary history means that there are many generalised and superficial encounters with writers, movements and critical ideas which are new to them. Their work on "A Streetcar Named Desire" has not yet developed beyond first reading and early impressions. However, work on the same play by Year 13 students indicates how much good progress they make over a year. In a lively discussion of that play and several other texts, students voiced strong personal responses well founded in a good knowledge of the texts and a sound understanding of moral and cultural issues. Written coursework analysed during the inspections showed that texts and assignments are well chosen and that students make good gains in knowledge and skills. Assessment objectives are well used so they understand precisely what they have to do to achieve well in coursework and in examinations.
139. The quality of teaching is very good. This is a strength. Coursework scrutinised confirmed that students benefit from very good teaching. Teachers prepare students very well for essays so ideas are well understood. Students receive good skills training in the planning and drafting stages and the final piece is accurately assessed in relation to examination criteria so they understand what they should do to improve. Teachers' subject knowledge is good. Where teachers share the teaching of a group they each use a range of approaches to challenge students in different ways and help them to achieve well. For example, a Year 13 group gave presentations based on individual research of the social background to "Lady Windermere's Fan"; then read scenes well in character before enjoying a perceptive discussion of characters and themes. Very good teaching encourages students to be responsible for their own learning. They respond well and are happy with their progress.
140. Leadership and management are good. There is a shared enthusiasm and an ambition that the students achieve well. Teachers are able and well deployed in good partnerships. The curriculum is good and students respond well to appropriate choices of texts and assignments. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory. Standards and numbers were maintained in a difficult period. Recruitment to the courses is increasing. The potential for improvement is strong.

## **LANGUAGE AND LITERACY ACROSS THE CURRICULUM**

141. Students are less restricted by a lack of literacy skills than younger pupils because there is not such a wide range of capability. They nevertheless demonstrate a need for the school to maintain and improve all four skills of speaking and listening, reading and writing. Students' oral skills are better developed than other skills. In informal discussion they are open, communicative and articulate. Subjects like science and mathematics make a successful effort to teach the specific terminology associated with advanced level work. However, not all students recognise the relevance of standard English for academic work and Year 13 drama students expressed very good ideas in a mixture of technical terms and colloquial language, which did not do justice to the content. Media studies students at Intermediate GNVQ were heard doing good work with dialogue on sound tracks and a student for whom English is a second language received good help

from the teacher and from a support assistant. A minority of students join the sixth form at varying times, reflecting mobility amongst the population. Some join from minority ethnic heritage with few skills in English, and support staff who are fluent in the required languages cannot always be found quickly. There is a very wide range of reading comprehension skills. Writing skills develop more slowly than other skills and students who do not achieve in written work as well as they do in discussions need help in preparing for examinations. Essay preparation is well taught and work seen in history, geography and English indicates that students make satisfactory progress with their writing. The library is inadequate for sixth form needs and contains very few reference texts for research at an appropriate level. However, students use the Internet effectively to research topics and they can give short, high quality presentations of their findings.

## MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **satisfactory**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is good overall and students achieve well.
- There is insufficient use of ICT to support teaching and learning.
- Students have good attitudes to learning and are enthusiastic about the subject.

### Commentary

142. The number of students entered for mathematics examinations at A- and AS level is small so comparisons with national averages is inappropriate. In 2004 there were three A-level candidates, two gaining pass grades. In relation to their GCSE grades this represented satisfactory achievement. Standards seen were generally consistent with the expectation of the examination syllabuses. Students in Year 13 demonstrated a good understanding of the Mechanics module they were studying. They were able to use differentiation and integration techniques to solve problems relating to the displacement, velocity and acceleration of objects. In doing some of the calculations involved in this work there was an over-reliance on the use of calculators.
143. Year 13 students are making good progress with their modular course leading to A-level and are achieving well. Students in Year 12 have spent a very short time in the sixth form and it is too early to judge achievement. However early indications suggest that they are coping well with the demands of the course.
144. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Teachers have good subject knowledge and plan lessons carefully so that work is well sequenced and matched to pupils' capability. Questioning of pupils is inclusive and students respond well to this with answers that demonstrate a secure understanding of the work they are studying. Students' response to teaching in classes with very small numbers in Year 13 is more subdued than in Year 12. However, students in both years are productive in lessons and are enthusiastic about their work. Whilst students are appropriately challenged in lessons, more opportunities to share ideas and explain strategies for solving problems would further enhance their knowledge and understanding of underlying principles. Homework is used to reinforce work covered in class and this is either marked by teachers or self marked by students. Marking done by teachers is sufficiently detailed to help students improve and in some cases indicates alternative solutions to problems. The majority of homework set involves doing textbook exercises and there are limited opportunities for independent research. Not enough use is made of ICT to support teaching and learning. Students do not have sufficient opportunity for the use of computers and graphical calculators to enhance their understanding, for example with algebraic equations and their curves.
145. Generally, students have positive attitudes to the subject and are keen to make progress. Very good relationships enable students to approach teachers for help, which is available outside of lessons. Students are willing to seek advice when needed. They also know how well they are doing and progress against predicted grades is constantly monitored by teachers.

146. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The subject is taught by a small team of committed teachers and because of this much of the work of managing the provision is done through informal means and there are no formal procedures in place to monitor the quality of lessons. There is a syllabus but no scheme of work. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory, and the potential exists to maintain and improve provision.

## Mathematics across the curriculum

147. The development of competence in numeracy to support learning across chosen subjects is not identified as a whole school priority. There is however no evidence that lack of proficiency in mathematics prevents full access to any sixth form subject. For example, in physics students are coping well with the mathematical demands of the subject. In other subjects, they are able to interpret data and represent it in a variety of forms.

## SCIENCE

The main focus for the inspection was physics. Chemistry and biology were sampled. In both of these subjects group sizes are very small. Students are achieving well and the quality of teaching and learning is sound. Results in previous examinations at A2 level show that the students achieved well for their prior attainment.

### Physics

Provision in physics is **satisfactory overall**.

#### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students in Year 13 are making satisfactory progress compared to expectations from their predicted grades.
- Teachers are very experienced, have good subject knowledge and enthusiasm.
- The small group size and individualised tuition enables pupils with lower-than average starting points to work towards challenging targets.
- Resources are satisfactory but lacking with respect to ICT software and hardware.
- Management and assessment procedures have weaknesses.

#### Commentary

148. Two Year 13 students comprise the first physics A-level cohort for some time and there is no prior attainment data to consider. Year 13 students attained AS level grades in line with predicted grades for most modules examined. Three students in Year 13 are working at a standard consistent with their predicted minimum and target grades. Pupils in Year 12 have not yet had time to demonstrate progress beyond GCSE.
149. Teaching is satisfactory overall. Teachers are very experienced specialists with an enthusiasm for the subject. Work is set at an appropriately demanding level, with plenty of review, repetition of key ideas and calculations to consolidate new learning. A balance exists between direct tuition, practical investigations and individual research. With only small groups (all boys), teachers know their students well and the students benefit from almost individualised tuition, which they value. Students enjoy their lessons and particularly appreciate the opportunity for constant feedback and challenges set.
150. Year 13 students have made satisfactory progress from their starting points and have gained the confidence to work, both independently and as a team, to plan and carry out investigations and analyses. For example, they investigated the relationship between detected radiation and distance from the source, setting up the experiment, getting data, and drawing graphs independently with little need for teacher intervention. These students have set themselves challenging targets and they feel that, with the small group and

individual tuition they get, they will be able to achieve well, from the satisfactory situation at present.

151. Year 12 students are still adapting to the demands of the course and need much support. When measuring the relationship between force and acceleration using data logging, they needed much teacher intervention for very basic techniques before they gained the confidence to work independently as a team. In another lesson, they took some time to gain the confidence to do calculations and apply formulae. However, they are keen to learn and satisfactory progress was made both in physics knowledge and in independent working in both lessons observed.
152. The key skills of application of number and ICT are used well to support learning wherever possible, despite a paucity of resources, such as interactive software. Communication skills are less well developed. Most writing is in the form of calculations and diagrams. Students' notes, which may seem meaningful as they write them, are too flimsy to provide a good reference for revision. Although students are developing their specialist language, in both mathematical applications and physics, little is being done to develop their communication of specialist physics knowledge in plain English to others.
153. Assessment is mainly through oral interactions and practice tests. Whilst the teacher checks students' writing and calculations in lessons, they are not getting written feedback to refer to at a later stage. Some students mark their own work, but mostly they do not. Whilst the students are satisfied that they do get very detailed and constructive feedback, which supports their progress, this feedback is not as lasting as it could be if evaluative comments and targets were written down about their work for future reference. Year 13 students are familiar with the assessment criteria and confident that they know how to improve on their mistakes or misconceptions. Appropriate records are kept of progress from module examinations and practice tests.
154. Leadership and management are satisfactory overall. The head of physics has a vision for the development of the physics course and hopes to recruit girls in addition to the boys in the near future through promotion in Years 10 and 11. However, there are significant weaknesses. Structures and recording systems are too relaxed and currently do not provide hard evidence for accountability. Only some modules of work have lesson plans, and no scheme of work exists, other than the examination specification. The lack of a formal scheme of work and lesson planning leads to overdependence on specific experienced teachers for delivery. It does not support the Head of science, and potential new, inexperienced teachers.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

The work in this curriculum area was sampled. One lesson of AVCE ICT was seen, in which students showed a thoughtful approach to web site design. Teaching was very good, and pupils showed enthusiasm and learned well. Achievement is sound overall and standards reflect expectations for the course.

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

155. Although there is no formal ICT skills teaching outside specific courses, students make good individual use of ICT in their courses. They have enough access to computers. Teachers encourage them to use them in most subjects, particularly for research and

presentation but the limited provision in Years 7 to 11 inhibits students in their learning. This is a crucial area for development. Many students have become adept in using ICT through their use at home, and where they have the knowledge, understanding and skills, they apply them well.

## **HUMANITIES**

The main focus for the inspection was psychology. History was sampled. In **history**, teaching and learning are effective and the students respond with good levels of interest. There is currently no geography taught. There is no teaching of religious education and statutory curriculum requirements are not met.

## Psychology

Overall the quality of provision in psychology is **satisfactory**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- In relation to their prior attainment, students' achievement is satisfactory.
- There are good relationships between staff and students, who are enthusiastic and interested.
- The needs of all capabilities are not sufficiently met.
- Marking and assessment do not provide students with a clear view of the level of their work and what they need to do to improve their grade.

### Commentary

156. Entry to the courses is open, and pupils with a wide range of GCSE results are on the course, including those who attained most of their grades below C. Nevertheless, achievement is satisfactory overall. The 2003 results for GCE A2 level were mostly at grades D and E with one pupil achieving an A grade. Provisional results for 2004 do not show any significant change. Results at AS level were similarly low, with a significant proportion of pupils not achieving any grade. Students are enthusiastic and show an interest in the subject, which they find challenging. They have good relationships with their teachers. As psychology is a completely new subject for all students in Year 12, they take some time to begin to develop the use of psychological language and the ability to marshal arguments in a debate. This reflects the limitations of language and literacy for a significant proportion of the students. In class, they listen carefully to their teachers and contribute when asked, but too often give minimal answers and generally do not generate questions themselves.

157. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. The subject benefits from being taught by knowledgeable teachers. However, there is a reluctance to deviate from the lesson plan, so that questions students ask are sometimes not dealt with in depth, losing the opportunity for the development of psychological thinking. Lessons are structured so that the course is covered and a variety of approaches is used, including the use of ICT for research and the preparation of presentations. The range of learning opportunities includes formal teaching, paired work and research. However, lessons do not provide a range of opportunities for students of all capabilities to learn effectively. The least able are not given sufficiently modified work and there is a lack of challenge for the more able. Much of the work seen includes the use of photocopied sheets and notes. Little work indicates comparison of research methods and outcome by the student themselves. There is evidence that these students are struggling to gain a grasp of key psychological concepts and the methodology behind research projects. There is a tendency to oversimplify these in oral contributions in class. Most students are struggling to write about the main similarities and contrasts between the main aspects of psychology they are studying. There is a lack of opportunities to undertake practical work and visits. Written work is not marked rigorously enough and examination criteria are not applied sufficiently realistically. There are some informative written comments, but these do not provide sufficient feedback for students to know precisely what they have to do to improve so that they achieve the grade they want.

158. Subject leadership and management are satisfactory overall. The very recently appointed subject co-ordinator is just beginning to develop his role. He is monitoring teaching to develop different styles and making links with other schools that teach psychology in order to share good practice. Money for resources is being spent on books for the library, but there is little access to appropriate journals. There is insufficient sharing of information among departmental staff about the effectiveness of different approaches to teaching and learning. As the subject was not offered at the last inspection no judgements can be made about improvement save that the addition to the curriculum offer is good.

## **ENGINEERING, TECHNOLOGY AND MANUFACTURING**

Design and technology was sampled. This year there is only one Year 13 student taking an advanced course. The small numbers involved at this level make it impossible to judge trends. However, teaching and learning are satisfactory and the improving qualities of leadership and management in Years 7 to 11 have the potential to encourage student participation at higher levels.

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

The main focus of the inspection was for drama and media studies, which are reported on below. Music was sampled. Teaching and learning are good in the BTEC music technology Level 3 course. Students are achieving well, and show particular strength in their studio work. Their attitudes are very good and they report that they find all aspects of the course rewarding and challenging. This course links well to the GCSE course, encouraging pupils to see the vocational worth of the subject, and an integral part of the 14-19 curriculum planning.

### **DRAMA**

The provision for drama is **satisfactory**.

### **MAIN STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES**

- Good teaching promotes good learning.
- Students display enthusiasm for the subject and have a good working relationship with their teachers.
- There are not enough opportunities for students to put theory into practice.

### **Commentary**

159. Students make satisfactory progress in their knowledge, skills and understanding during the two years of A-level drama. The very small number of students taking the examination in 2003 gained pass grades but any comparison with national averages is unreliable. No students sat the examination in 2004. The A-level drama course will be terminated at the end of this academic year, with students in the current Year 12 beginning an AVCE course.
160. Inspection evidence indicates that the two students in the current Year 13 are on task to achieve above average grades in relation to the expectations for the course. The three students in Year 12 are making satisfactory progress in their knowledge of Stanislavski's philosophies and practices as they considered how they could be applied to an interpretation of a scene from Henrik Ibsen's 'A Doll's House'.
161. Students on the A-level course in Year 13 make good progress in their knowledge of dramatic complication and how it can be used to enhance tension and pace in their own devised drama. Students also had a good knowledge of theatre staging as they considered what might be the best performance area for their work. Overall, achievement is satisfactory as students make gains in their knowledge, understanding and skills. As well as taking part in school productions, students present their examination pieces to an audience of parents, teachers and friends. Students also see a number of theatre productions to widen their knowledge of drama. With the chance for students to explore a

range of moral and social issues in their own improvisations and to read and examine plays from around the world, the subject makes a valuable contribution to students' moral, social and cultural development.

162. The quality of teaching is good overall and ranges from satisfactory to very good. Three periods were observed during the inspection; one Advanced Vocational Certificate in Education (AVCE) lesson in Year 12 and two A-level lesson in Year 13. Lessons are well planned and organised with teachers using their own knowledge of the subject to good effect. Teachers have high expectations of students and provide them with a range of interesting and demanding drama activities. However, the lessons observed were very much of a theoretical nature, with no real chance to see how the students would put their theories into practice. Opportunity to do so would have introduced an element of pace and variety into the lessons. The satisfactory and good progress was enhanced by students' enthusiasm for the subject and the good working relationships they had with their teachers.
163. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The member of staff responsible for the subject has taught at the school for just over a year but only assumed responsibility for the subject at the beginning of this academic year. Over the past year he has put into place good schemes of work to support A-level Drama and the recently introduced AVCE course. The subject was not offered at the time of the last inspection, so no judgement about improvement can be made.

## **MEDIA STUDIES**

The provision for media studies is **good**.

## **MAIN STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES**

- Standards are broadly in line with national expectations.
- Teaching is good and the good specialist knowledge of teachers enhances students' learning.
- Good technical resources contribute to good learning.

## **COMMENTARY**

164. Standards on entry to the course in Year 12 vary significantly and range from students who have not studied the subject at GCSE level to those who have already gained a General National Vocational Qualification (GNVQ) in Year 12 before commencing the course. No one sat the A-level examinations in 2003. Two of the five students who completed the course in 2004 gained an A grade in the unconfirmed examination results. It is not possible to predict final results for students taking the newly introduced Advanced Vocational Certificate in Education (AVCE) in the current Year 12, though standards in individual lessons were at least satisfactory when compared to expectations at this point of their studies.
165. Overall, standards in both Years 12 and 13 are broadly in line with the expectations for the course. Achievement is satisfactory. Students in Year 12 on the AVCE course are making good progress in a unit of work on photography, as they explored and evaluated the technical and aesthetic qualities of a range of photographs. In another lesson they took control of their own learning as they worked on computers in groups in selecting a

range of sound effects and music to accompany a radio advertisement. Students in Year 13 on the A-level course made satisfactory progress in their knowledge of the creation and control of television news programmes, whilst in another lesson they extended their knowledge of narrative structure and the code of convention of science fiction films, and their ability to convey negative and positive images of life in the future. The satisfactory and sometimes good progress observed in lessons was enhanced by students' enthusiasm for the subject and their positive attitudes to work. A minority of students however can be somewhat passive and are happy to defer to the idea and opinions of their teachers.

166. Teaching is good, with some very good teaching. Four lessons were observed during the period of the inspection, two AVCE lessons in Year 12 and two A-level lessons in Year 13. GNVQ media studies is taught as a one-year course in Year 12, but was not observed. Lessons are well planned, organised and managed, with teachers using technical resources well to promote students' learning. Teachers demonstrate personal enthusiasm for the work in hand and create a motivating environment in which good learning can take place. They have good specialist knowledge, which they use well to enhance students' learning. With its focus on the exploration of how the media responds to a range of contemporary and world events, the subject makes a positive contribution to students' moral, social and cultural development.
167. Leadership and management are satisfactory, with both the member of staff responsible for the subject and those who teach it, putting into place a good range of documentation to support teaching. Resources are good, with teachers and students having access to up-to-date computers, including editing features. Accommodation is only satisfactory, with students being somewhat cramped in a small base room. The subject was not reported on during the last inspection. It is therefore not possible to compare standards with those at the time of the last report, though there is evidence to support the judgement that it is an improving subject.

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

The BTec National Diploma in sport course was sampled. All sixteen students are meeting course requirements and are achieving well. In the lesson observed they worked hard, gained understanding of the principles of types of fitness and successfully learnt to administer fitness tests to other students.

## **BUSINESS**

The foci for the inspection were the courses offered in this area.

### **Business**

Provision in business is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Students' achievement is good.
- The quality of teaching is good and as a result standards are being raised.
- Resources are insufficient to support the curriculum.
- Teachers too rarely draw on examples of business practice from the real world.

## Commentary

168. The school offers the VCE and the Advanced VCE double award in business studies. Examination results at the VCE level have been consistently in line with the national average for the last three years, the proportion of students achieving the highest A-B grades are close to the national average. The Advanced VCE results show that well over half of students gained A-C grades in the last three years. The most recent unvalidated results for 2004 show that all entrants achieved these A-C grades. The number of students choosing Advanced level business studies has been increasing steadily for several years and it is now one of the most popular choices at this level in the school.
169. Standards are broadly in line with national expectations overall. Achievement in Year 13 is good, building on the steady progress made by students in the previous year. Students increase their depth of subject knowledge, improve their skills of analysis and critical evaluation, and apply these to a wider range of more complex business problems. Students demonstrate the capacity to link theory and practice, as seen for example in one lesson using motivation theory to evaluate the success and failures of different teamwork strategies to increase business productivity. In another lesson, students assess the role and significance of sales support staff in determining business success, using three different scenarios to predict outcomes. Standards of written work at the end of Year 12 are well in line with national expectations. Students bring the full depth of their subject knowledge and analytic skills to bear on specific business problems. The quality of presentation is often good.
170. The quality of teaching is good overall, and has a positive impact on learning. There is no unsatisfactory teaching. Teacher subject knowledge is good, and well deployed to teach the curriculum. Individual lesson plans are structured on a three-part basis, incorporating a range of strategies and activities, which are well matched to learning targets. The best lessons are characterised by good use of time and pace, with challenging questions that encourage students to apply this knowledge to specific case studies and develop their skills of critical analysis. These lessons combine clear presentation while generating enthusiasm for the subject. Teacher-student relationships are good. Students are well motivated and express a high degree of satisfaction with their learning experience. They receive good feedback and know how to improve their grades. However in some lessons, content and activities are less well planned to match the needs of more able students. There are also too few opportunities for students to learn about and discuss current, real life business problems, and there is insufficient use of reference material from newspapers, journals or the media. ICT is not yet fully incorporated into lesson planning. Learning is not well supported by resources and students have to provide their own basic textbook.
171. The overall quality of leadership and management is satisfactory. The provision is managed efficiently by the head of department in co-operation with her well qualified, very committed and hard working staff. The team is very well integrated, effective and shares common goals to enable students to achieve their full potential. Teacher-student relations are very good and make an important contribution to student motivation and achievement. The curriculum, which has been vocationally based for several years, is well matched to student needs. Assessment and monitoring are used effectively to promote learning. The department also provides course work surgeries after school to help students to improve their grades. However, strategies that develop higher order

intellectual skills are not built into lesson planning sufficiently. Teachers too rarely draw on examples of business practice in the real world. Resources are insufficient to support student learning at this level. There is relatively little access to textbooks, journals, newspaper articles, relevant video and documentary material, or opportunities to attend conferences. Students are not even provided with a basic textbook. Similarly, staff have few opportunities for professional development and contact with colleagues elsewhere.

## **HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE**

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Students' achievement is good on both courses.
- Teaching and learning are good; well-planned activities hold students' interest.
- Thorough assessment and coursework clinics provide very good support.
- Students' attitudes to their work are good; they participate well.
- ICT is used insufficiently as a regular learning tool.

### **COMMENTARY**

172. In 2003, health and social care was one of the highest performing subjects but results are not as good in 2004. Retention on the courses is good. Most students join both courses with relatively modest entry requirements, including a few with low reading ages. Current standards are broadly in line with the course requirements but, because of the small numbers, any comparison with national data is unreliable.
173. Achievement is good, including that of students from minority ethnic backgrounds and those with learning needs. Students' subject knowledge is broad; coursework shows particularly good understanding of factors that affect health, child development, first aid and legal requirements in the work place. Teachers insist on the use of appropriate specialist vocabulary so that students use a wide range confidently and accurately in discussion and written work. A significant minority retain weak spelling and do not systematically use spelling aids.
174. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Teachers have good subject knowledge and plan lessons with clear learning objectives. Good relationships and class control provide a good learning environment so that students participate well and have good attitudes. They enjoy the good variety of activities, discussion in groups and pairs and individual research. Teachers' skilful questioning and discussion consolidate learning well. Assessment is very good. Work is carefully marked, clear guidance shows students how to raise the quality of the work and difficulties are tackled in the department's weekly coursework clinics after school.
175. Leadership is satisfactory. Health and social care is part of the business studies faculty. Management by the head of department and the co-ordinator is good overall, particularly the planning of the course handbook, the link between assessment and coursework clinics and frequent reporting to parents. Students benefit from first aid training, practical sessions with a visiting nurse and a week's work experience, but visits to and links with working environments are fewer than usually found on vocational courses. Students do not have regular access to computers in lessons as only one of the teaching rooms,

shared with business studies, has computers and these were little used during the inspection. Students work individually on computers for research and presenting coursework but do not use them for oral presentations. Health and social care was not reported on in detail in the previous report.

## **PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT AND GENERAL PROGRAMMES**

At this early stage in the academic year there were no courses available to observe. A general studies course is taken by a minority of students, and in the light of the increasing numbers the school recognises that this is an area for urgent attention. Additionally, religious education is not taught and statutory requirements are not met.

## 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		4
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	5	4
<b>Overall standards achieved</b>		<b>4</b>
Pupils' achievement	4	4
<b>Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities</b>		<b>4</b>
Attendance	4	6
Attitudes	3	4
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	3	4
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development		4
<b>The quality of education provided by the school</b>		<b>4</b>
The quality of teaching	4	4
How well pupils learn	4	4
The quality of assessment	4	4
How well the curriculum meets pupils' needs	3	4
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities		4
Accommodation and resources	4	4
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety		5
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	4	3
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	3	3
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents		3
The quality of the school's links with the community	4	4
The school's links with other schools and colleges	4	3
<b>The leadership and management of the school</b>		<b>3</b>
The governance of the school	4	4
The leadership of the headteacher		2
The leadership of other key staff	3	3
The effectiveness of management	3	3

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