

# INSPECTION REPORT

**NORTH LEAMINGTON COMMUNITY SCHOOL AND  
ARTS COLLEGE**

Leamington Spa

LEA area: Warwickshire

Unique reference number: 125748

Headteacher: Mr D Hazeldine

Lead inspector: Mr R Palmer

Dates of inspection: 20<sup>th</sup> – 24<sup>th</sup> September 2004

Inspection number: 268865

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

© Crown copyright 2004

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

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

## **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Type of school: Comprehensive  
School category: Community  
Age range of pupils: 11 – 18  
Gender of pupils: Mixed  
Number on roll: 1574

School address: Cloister Way  
Leamington Spa  
Warwickshire

Postcode: CV32 6QF

Telephone number: 01926 338711

Fax number: 01926 429818

Appropriate authority: Governing Body

Name of chair of governors: Mrs G Sheppard

Date of previous inspection: 26<sup>th</sup> – 30<sup>th</sup> April 1999

## **CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL**

The school is much larger than most other schools and is a little under subscribed. It operates on three separate sites. In 2003, it gained renewal of its status as a specialist performing arts college. In all three years, 2001 to 2003, the school received the School Achievement Award in recognition of its success in improving students' achievement in public examinations. It obtained the awards of Investor in People in 2001, Artsmark Gold in 2002 and Sportsmark in 2003. Students' attainment on entry to the school in Year 7 is above average. Students come from a wide range of social and economic backgrounds. The proportion of students entitled to receive free school meals is below average. About one in five students comes from a wide range of non-white ethnic minorities, including about 130 students of Indian heritage. The proportion of students whose mother tongue is other than English, about one in eight, is higher than in most schools. Three students are at an early stage of learning English. The proportion of students with special educational needs, one in four, is above average. Most of these students have moderate or specific learning difficulties or emotional and behavioural difficulties. The school has a designated unit for 12 students with emotional and behavioural difficulties. The sixth form has grown rapidly and is much larger than in most schools. It is housed in a large Victorian college called Binswood Hall, which is a mile away from the two sites that accommodate Years 7 to 11. Just over three out of five students stay on from Year 11. Around 40 students join the sixth form each year from other schools. The backgrounds of students in Years 12 and 13 broadly match those of students in Years 7 to 11. On entry to Year 12, students' attainment is above average in terms of GCSE attainment and broadly average for the courses studied.



## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
31198	R Palmer	Lead inspector	
13448	D Lloyd	Lay inspector	
20729	J Berry	Team inspector	Science
21954	T Chipp	Team inspector	Art and design
30216	A Elliott	Team inspector	History Citizenship General studies
33324	J Fullwood	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages
4576	M Griffiths	Team inspector	Physical education Special educational needs
10060	D Gutmann	Team inspector	ICT in sixth form Health and social care
28199	P Lawley	Team inspector	Media studies Performing arts Psychology
23188	V Maunder	Team inspector	Biology Chemistry
31879	D Rhodes	Team inspector	Mathematics
20767	J Royle	Team inspector	Information and communication technology Music
4381	R Sharif	Team inspector	English
23891	P Slape	Team inspector	Design and technology
2626	M Thompson	Team inspector	Work-related learning
18673	R Wilkins	Team inspector	Religious education
20497	V H Williams	Team inspector	Geography Travel and tourism Business studies

The inspection contractor was:

peakschoolhaus  
BPS Business Centre  
Brake Lane  
Boughton  
Newark  
Nottinghamshire  
NG22 9HQ

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

# REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
<b>PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE MAIN INSPECTION FINDINGS</b>	
<b>STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS</b>	<b>11</b>
Standards achieved in subjects and courses	
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	
<b>QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL</b>	<b>16</b>
Teaching and learning	
The curriculum	
Care, guidance and support	
Partnership with parents, other schools and the community	
<b>LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 AND 4</b>	
<b>SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM</b>	
<b>PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS</b>	<b>56</b>

## PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

### OVERALL EVALUATION

This **good** school provides **good** value for money. It is on the way to becoming a very good school. Achievement is good. Standards rise from slightly above average when students join in Year 7 to close to well above average by the end of Year 11. Boys and girls of all capabilities and ethnic backgrounds receive a good quality of education. Teaching and learning are good overall. Leadership and management are good.

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

- GCSE results were well above those of similar schools in 2003 and showed very good achievement.
- Standards in the sixth form are rising, are above average and indicate good achievement.
- Good teaching, a very good curriculum and students' positive attitudes promote good learning.
- Good leadership and management help to ensure very good and continued improvement.
- In a few subjects, there is not enough use of information and communication technology (ICT) to support students' learning.
- A-level results, though improving, have not been high enough in biology, chemistry, ICT and product design.
- The very good quality of care and support enhances students' all-round development.

Improvement since the previous inspection in 1999 is **very good**. GCSE and A-level results and achievement are now much higher. Teaching and the curriculum have improved and motivate students to achieve well. Good leadership and management tackled the previous key issues well, though the constraint remains of operating on split sites with some inadequate accommodation.

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

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

Achievement is **good** for boys and girls of all ethnic backgrounds and capabilities, including those with special educational needs. In 2003, results in the Year 9 national tests were above average and higher than predictions based on prior attainment. GCSE results were close to well above average and were well above those of similar schools. The school met its suitably challenging GCSE targets. GCSE results have risen at a faster rate than the national improvement. Standards overall are currently close to well above average by Year 11. Standards in Years 7 to 9 are above average in English and mathematics and average in science. They show good achievement currently in English and mathematics and satisfactory achievement in science. In Years 10 and 11, standards are currently well above average in English, science and geography. They are above average in mathematics and most other subjects, though they are average in art and design, ICT and music. Achievement is very good in English and geography. It is good in mathematics and science and all other subjects, apart from ICT in which it is satisfactory. In the sixth form, standards are rising, are above national averages and show that students are achieving well.



Students' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is **good** overall. Students have good attitudes to work and the vast majority behave well.

## **QUALITY OF EDUCATION**

The overall quality of education provided by the school is **good**. It has some very good features.

Teaching and learning are good in Years 7 to 13. Teaching in Years 7 to 11 is good or better overall in all subjects except ICT in which it is satisfactory. Students with special educational needs receive good teaching and very good support and make good progress. Students at an early stage of learning English achieve well although their assessment profiles are not always detailed enough for teachers to meet their needs fully when support staff are absent. Teachers generally use assessment well to help students to improve their work. Marking is satisfactory but varies from very good to less than adequate. Firm and fair management of classes ensures a good working atmosphere in the vast majority of lessons. Teachers make good use of their subject expertise to challenge students to think and to work at levels suited to their capabilities. In the very few unsatisfactory lessons, the management of behaviour was unsatisfactory and work was either too easy or too hard.

The very good curriculum meets the needs of boys and girls of all capabilities. Students enrich their learning through very good out-of-class activities. The quality of care, support and guidance is very good. Links are very good with other schools and the community and are good with parents.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

Leadership, management and governance are good, although the school does not meet the statutory requirement to provide a daily act of collective worship. The very good leadership of the headteacher sets a very clear direction for continued improvement and is a key factor in the many improvements of recent years. Senior managers work successfully to ensure good teamwork among staff and to ensure good harmony among students of all backgrounds. Consequently, students have many and good opportunities to realise their academic potential and to enhance their all-round development. Financial management is good. Governors know the school's strengths and weaknesses and set suitably challenging targets.

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

Parents and students have positive views. Parents say their children like coming to school and they are particularly pleased with the way the school helps students to become mature and independent. A few parents and many students say that behaviour is not always good enough and that homework is not of good quality. In this very large school a few students behave poorly at times. The school deals quickly and thoroughly with incidents of poor behaviour. The provision of homework has improved and is now good overall.

## **IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED**

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

- make more use of ICT to support learning across subjects;
- raise achievement in Years 12 and 13 in biology, chemistry, ICT and design and technology;
- improve the accommodation in subjects such as art and design.

and, to meet statutory requirements:

- make provision for a daily act of collective worship for all students.

## THE SIXTH FORM AT NORTH LEAMINGTON COMMUNITY SCHOOL AND ARTS COLLEGE

### OVERALL EVALUATION

The sixth form is **good** and is cost effective. Standards are rising. They are currently above average and indicate good achievement for male and female students of all ethnic backgrounds. Improvement is very good since the previous inspection. Numbers on roll have nearly doubled. Retention of students on courses is good. Good leadership and management ensure that sixth formers benefit from a very good curriculum and a very positive environment for learning.

#### The main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Examination results are rising, are above average and represent good achievement overall.
- Good teaching and committed leadership and management have contributed to very good improvements since the previous inspection.
- Very good curricular provision promotes students' all-round and academic development.
- Achievement in biology, chemistry, computing and product design should be higher.
- Students have too few opportunities to use ICT to support their work in a few subjects.
- The learning environment of Binswood Hall motivates students to work hard and maturely.

### 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 <b>English</b> is <b>very good</b> . A2 results in 2003 were above average. Standards are currently well above average; students are doing better than expected, taking into account their GCSE results. Very good teaching and students' very positive attitudes enable them to achieve very well.
Mathematics	Provision in <b>mathematics</b> is <b>very good</b> . AS and A2 results are usually well above average. Currently, teaching is very good, students' achievement is very good and standards are well above average.
Science	Provision is <b>satisfactory</b> in <b>biology</b> and in <b>chemistry</b> . In 2003, A2 results in both subjects were below average and below expectations based on students' GCSE attainment. Currently, teaching is satisfactory overall in biology and chemistry, standards have risen to average and students' achievement is now satisfactory.
Information and communication technology (ICT)	Provision in <b>computing</b> is <b>satisfactory</b> . AS and A2 results in 2003 were well below average and below expectations based on students' GCSE results. Teaching is now satisfactory; standards have improved to average and indicate satisfactory achievement.
Humanities	Provision in <b>history</b> is <b>good</b> . A2 results were average in 2003 and slightly below expectations from students' GCSE attainment. Currently, teaching is good, standards are above average and students are achieving well.  Provision in <b>psychology</b> is <b>good</b> . AS and A2 results in 2003 were well above average and represented very good achievement for the large number of students involved. Currently, standards are above average, achievement is good and the quality of teaching and learning is good.

Engineering, technology and manufacturing	Provision in <b>product design</b> is <b>satisfactory</b> . For the few students in 2003, results were well below average for A2 and above average for AS. Currently, teaching is satisfactory, standards are average and achievement is satisfactory.
Visual and performing arts and media	Provision in <b>art and design</b> is <b>good</b> . A2 and AS results are usually above average but were well below average in 2003 and, unusually, well below expectations. Standards are currently average, teaching is good and students are achieving well.  Provision in <b>performing arts</b> is <b>very good</b> . VCE results recently and standards of work seen are well above average. Very good teaching ensures that students' achievement is very good.  Provision in <b>media studies</b> is <b>very good</b> . A2 results and standards seen are well above average. Teaching is very good and enables students to achieve very well.
Hospitality, sports, leisure and travel	Provision in <b>travel and tourism</b> is <b>good</b> . Standards are average on this vocational course. Good teaching results in students achieving higher than predictions based on prior GCSE attainment.
Business	Provision in <b>business studies</b> is <b>very good</b> . VCE results were well above average in 2003 and indicated very good achievement. Very good teaching ensures that standards and achievement are similarly high currently.
Health and social care	Provision in <b>health and social care</b> is <b>good</b> . VCE results in 2003 were average and indicated good achievement. Teaching is good and helps current students to achieve well and to reach average standards.
General education	Provision in <b>general studies</b> is <b>very good</b> . A2 results were above average in 2003, but AS results were well below average for the large entry. Currently, good teaching and very good management and resources help students to achieve very well and reach above average standards.

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

## ADVICE, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

The quality of advice, guidance and support is **good** in Years 12 and 13. Teachers assess students' progress thoroughly and frequently. Students receive good advice about higher education and future careers. Very good induction helps students to settle in well. The very good range of courses matches very well students' aspirations and capabilities.

## LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE SIXTH FORM

Leadership and management are **good**.

Standards and achievement are rising because good management and a shared commitment among staff encourage all students to achieve their best. Very good planning ensures that the curriculum meets students' needs very well. The very good ethos for learning at Binswood Hall ensures harmony among students of all backgrounds and capabilities. The school does not meet statutory requirements for the provision of a daily act of collective worship.

## STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Students have very positive views about school and enjoy being in the sixth form. Particularly, they like the very good learning environment of Binswood Hall. They say, with good justification, that teaching provides them with work of appropriate difficulty that makes them work hard. They have

very few concerns, though some commented on the shortage of textbooks in a few subjects. The school is aware of this shortage but recognises that until it has cleared its deficit budget, a few shortages in learning resources will persist.

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

### **STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS**

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

Standards improve from slightly above average on entry in Year 7 to close to well above average by Year 11. They indicate good achievement by Year 11.

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

- GCSE results were well above average in 2003 and indicated very good achievement.
- Results in Year 9 national tests were above those of similar schools in 2003.
- Insufficient use of ICT restricts students' achievement in a few subjects.
- Low attainers and students with special educational needs are making much better progress than they did at the previous inspection.

#### **Commentary**

1. Results in external examinations in 2003 show that, compared with students' prior attainment, standards rose above expectations by the end of Year 9 and well above expectations by the end of Year 11. The School Achievement Award from the Department for Education and Skills, in all of the three years 2001 to 2003, recognises the school's very good performance in helping boys and girls of all capabilities to add considerable value to their earlier levels of attainment. Since the previous inspection, standards of attainment are much higher and achievement continues to rise.
2. Results in National Curriculum tests taken at the end of Year 9 are rising at the national rate of improvement. In 2003, results in these tests were above average in English and mathematics and average in science. They were above average for similar schools and indicate good achievement. There is little difference in the overall results of boys and girls in the national tests.
3. GCSE results have improved faster than the national trend. In 2003, they were above the national average and well above those of similar schools. These results indicate very good achievement for boys and girls of all ethnic backgrounds, including the highest attainers and students with special educational needs. The proportion of students gaining five or more GCSE grades A\*-C was well above the national average. Results were particularly good in English, mathematics and science. Girls attained slightly higher results than boys, although boys' results were well above the national average for boys. In 2003, the school met its suitably challenging targets for GCSE performance.
4. Provisional GCSE results for 2004 are lower than in the two previous years but are slightly above the previous year's national average. This decline is due to two main factors. Firstly, the prior attainment of that particular Year 11 group was lower than that of preceding years. Secondly, the school experienced a fairly large turnover of teachers in the past two years. This resulted in discontinuity of learning for students in a few subjects because of the need to use many supply teachers temporarily. It had a particularly adverse effect on GCSE results in mathematics, which is traditionally one of the school's highest performing subjects. The school

has succeeded in recruiting sufficient qualified teachers in all subjects. Consequently, current standards are rising to their previous close to well above average level by Year 11.

**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	65 (56)	52 (50)
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	93 (94)	91 (91)
Percentage of pupils gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	97 (98)	96 (96)
Average point score per pupil (best eight subjects)	38.6 (37.1)	34.7 (34.8)

*There were 231 pupils in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.*

5. Standards of work seen in Years 7 to 9 are above average overall. They match those shown recently in the Year 9 national tests and teachers' assessments. By Year 9, standards are currently above average in English, mathematics, citizenship, geography, history and physical education. They are average in science and all other subjects. Achievement by Year 9 is good in English, mathematics, art and design, citizenship, geography, history, music and physical education. It is satisfactory in science and all other subjects.
6. In Years 10 and 11, standards are currently well above average in English and geography. They are above average in mathematics and science and in most other subjects, although they are average in art and design, ICT and music. Compared with their prior attainment, the achievement by Year 11 of boys and girls of all ethnic backgrounds and capabilities, including those who have special educational needs, is currently very good in English and geography. It is good in mathematics and science and all other subjects apart from ICT, in which it is satisfactory.
7. Students make good progress in lessons throughout Years 7 to 11 because teaching is good and they use their above average literacy and numeracy skills well to support and extend their work across subjects. Students make satisfactory use of their competent ICT skills to support their learning in many subjects. However, the limited access to the computing equipment restricts the development and use of students' ICT skills to enrich and enhance their work.
8. In work seen in Years 7 to 11, the achievement of boys and girls is broadly similar across subjects. Interestingly, the mathematics department operates a special support programme that helps girls to get closer to the higher standards attained by boys. Monitoring and assessment of students' work and their results in external examinations show no significant differences in the achievement of students from different ethnic backgrounds. Good racial harmony contributes to a climate of good learning. Students of all ethnic and social backgrounds cooperate well with one another in class and make similar rates of progress.
9. Students with special educational needs make good progress towards their individual targets and achieve as well as other students. They develop confidence and improve their basic skills in literacy and numeracy as a result of good teaching and the sensitive support from teaching assistants. GCSE results attained in 2003 by students with special educational needs and by those of low attainment represented very good achievement. These results show the success of the school's very good response to the criticism in the previous inspection report that these students were not doing as well as they should.
10. The school has identified students who are gifted or talented. Its procedures for assessment and tracking the progress of all students ensure that students who are gifted or talented generally make progress at a similar rate to other students.
11. Students who are at an early stage of learning English make the same progress as other students because they receive appropriate specialist help and class teachers know their needs

thoroughly. Students whose mother tongue is other than English and who are fluent in English, achieve well across subjects.

12. Status as a performing arts college has a positive effect on achievement. Emphasis on teaching the arts results in good quality of discussion and debate in lessons, leading to improved speaking and listening skills. The focus on performing skills enhances students' ability to cooperate together as they work in teams. One reason for the generally narrow gap between boys' and girls' achievement is the developing self-confidence of boys, particularly in presentational skills, following on from good teaching of drama and dance. Students enhance their learning through very good contact with local arts organisations and professionals.

### Sixth form

In Years 12 and 13, standards continue to rise, are above average and show good achievement.

#### **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	96.2 (90.6)	89.4 (92.6)
Percentage of entries gaining A-B grades	32.3 (29.3)	32.6 (35.3)
Average point score per pupil	270.2 (271.5)	258.2 (263.3)

*There were 109 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year*

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- AS/A2/VCE results are improving, are above average and indicate good achievement.
- A2 results in biology, chemistry, ICT and product design have not been high enough recently.
- Standards and achievement are high in the specialist performing arts subjects.
- Insufficient use of ICT restricts students' achievement in a few subjects.

### Commentary

13. Students' levels of attainment on entry to Year 12 match those found in many other sixth forms. In 2002 and 2003, results in AS, A2 and vocational certificate of education (VCE) examinations were above average for male and female students. Compared with students' prior attainment in GCSE examinations, they indicate good achievement. Results have improved in all of the past three years. Provisional results in 2004 are close to very good achievement overall. Standards are much higher than at the previous inspection and achievement is improving year on year. As befits a specialist performing arts college, standards and achievement are high in subjects such as performing arts, dance, drama and media studies.
14. AS/A2 results have fluctuated recently in a few subjects such as art and design, biology, chemistry, computing, product design and history, mainly as a result of staffing or curricular difficulties that are now largely resolved. Results in 2004 and observation of current work indicate that achievement in art and design and history is now good and is satisfactory in the other four subjects.
15. In Years 12 and 13, standards of work are currently above average. They are rising as a result of good teaching and assessment that help students to consolidate and improve their work. Standards indicate good achievement for male and female students of all ethnic backgrounds and capabilities. Students make good use of their above average skills of literacy and numeracy to assist their work across subjects. They make satisfactory use of their competence in ICT to research and present their work in many subjects. However, in a few subjects such as history and health and social care, the development of students' analytical skills is hindered because they have too few opportunities to use their skills in computing.



16. In the 15 subjects that were the focus of the inspection, standards are currently well above average in English, mathematics, business studies, media studies and performing arts. They are above average in general studies, psychology, travel and tourism and health and social care. Standards are average in the other subjects. Achievement by Year 13, taking into account students' prior GCSE attainment, is currently very good in English, mathematics, business studies, general studies, media studies and performing arts. It is good in most other subjects and is not less than satisfactory in any subject.
17. Good leadership and management, good teaching and students' very positive attitudes to work are helping to raise achievement. The good rates of retention on AS, A2 and vocational courses assist the continuity of learning.
18. Improvement since the previous inspection is very good. The sixth form has doubled in size, standards have risen to above average and students now have access to a much greater range and number of subjects.

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

Students' attitudes and behaviour are good. Attendance has improved and is average. Punctuality is satisfactory. Students' personal development is good. Moral and social development is very good, cultural development is good and spiritual development is satisfactory.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Very good provision for social and moral development leads to good relationships, racial harmony and predominantly good behaviour.
- The poor behaviour of a small minority of students disrupts a few lessons.
- Students are very enthusiastic about most aspects of the school.

### **Commentary**

19. The school has clear expectations in relation to the way students behave and the respect and consideration they show for others. Because staff insist on appropriate conduct in lessons and encourage students to think carefully about the consequences of their actions, boys and girls are growing into mature and sensible young people. Behaviour around the school is consistently good. Students are self-disciplined and controlled. They are polite, friendly and helpful to visitors and to one another, paying particular attention to the needs of those who require assistance with mobility. Relationships between students and their teachers are good, so that in most lessons a relaxed, informal atmosphere helps students to learn effectively. In this large school, in which a significant proportion of students come from minority ethnic backgrounds, racial harmony is a strong and positive feature. Students themselves feel that the school's status as a performing arts college encourages teamwork, which means that they share a common interest and take part in many activities together.
20. Rates of attendance match the national average and are higher than local averages, as a result of the school's hard work and suitable procedures to encourage good attendance.

### **Attendance**

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

Authorised absence	
School data:	7.4

Unauthorised absence	
School data:	0.3

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.

21. Behaviour in lessons is usually good, but a small number of students, usually boys, cause minor disruption in a few lessons, which affects their own learning and is detrimental to the achievement of others. The school's behaviour policy has a clear structure of escalating sanctions to deal with this kind of misconduct, which is usually effective. When all other avenues have been exhausted, or in extreme cases, the school triggers the final sanction of exclusion. The number of exclusions in the past year is proportionately fewer than at the time of the previous inspection. The school has sensitive and thoughtful procedures for reintegrating students when they return. These involve extensive support from pastoral staff, in liaison with parents.

## Exclusions

### Ethnic background of pupils

### Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	1270	65	5
White – Irish	2	0	0
White – any other White background	23	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	38	3	0
Mixed – White and Black African	2	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	17	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	11	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Indian	130	2	0
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani	6	1	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	19	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	5	3	0
Black or Black British – African	8	0	0
Chinese	9	0	0
Any other ethnic group	1	1	0
No ethnic group recorded	33	0	0

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

22. Students of all ethnic backgrounds and capabilities, including those with special educational needs, enjoy school and speak animatedly about the wide range of opportunities to learn and to take part in varied activities. Older students, particularly, recognise the importance of working hard to achieve good results as a firm foundation for the future. The school encourages students to develop a sense of personal responsibility, both for their own learning and in respect of the world around them. They respond to this by entering wholeheartedly into such activities as fund-raising for charities, working for the Student Parliament, volunteering to become peer mentors and taking part in dance, drama and music performances. They appreciate that the varied programmes they follow in school, enriched by out-of-hours activities, are helping them to develop well-rounded personalities. The social, moral and cultural elements of students' education do much to enhance their personal development. The school does not

always exploit to the full its cultural diversity to extend learning. Spiritual elements are present in the experiences that students are offered, both in lessons and in extra-curricular activities, but there is no whole-school approach to planning for students' spiritual development.

23. The school is very successful in developing the confidence and self-esteem of students with special educational needs. A consistent approach to supporting students who have behavioural difficulties is largely successful in enabling them to become responsible members of the school.

## Sixth form

24. Sixth form students have a very positive approach to learning. Their conduct is very good. They have made a conscious decision to pursue their educational goals and commit themselves to their work in a mature fashion. Very good relationships between students and their teachers result in well-motivated students who are determined to succeed. Sixth formers enjoy working independently. Because teachers value their contributions in lessons, male and female students enter into discussions enthusiastically and are confident to express their views. Outside lessons, students take advantage of good opportunities to develop their personal and social skills, for example, through leading the Student Parliament and organising their own enrichment activities. They mentor new students in Year 7, work on drama and dance performances with primary school pupils and raise funds for a variety of charities. Good attendance and punctuality contribute to good learning in the sixth form.

## QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

Students receive a good quality of education throughout Years 7 to 13. The curriculum and the quality of care, support, advice and guidance are very good. Accommodation and resources are satisfactory.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Assessment has improved and is good overall.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching is helping to raise standards for students of all ethnic backgrounds.
- Good planning ensures that the teaching of students with special educational needs is good.
- A very small amount of unsatisfactory teaching affects progress adversely in a few lessons.
- Students make little use ICT to improve their work in a few subjects.

### Commentary

25. The school maintains the good overall quality of teaching and learning observed in the previous inspection. The amount of unsatisfactory teaching has declined to a small amount. Teaching is good overall in Years 7 to 11 in all subjects, apart from ICT in which it is satisfactory.

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 203 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
4 (2%)	41 (20%)	99 (49%)	54 (27%)	4 (2%)	1 (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.*

26. A positive consequence of the development as a performing arts college is the increased confidence and competence that students acquire in carrying out practical activities and investigations. They improve their speaking, listening and performing skills across subjects and especially in drama. Students learn how to interpret, plan and explain events well, as observed, for example, in many lessons in English, mathematics, geography and history. Students in Years 10 and 11 value the very good enrichment provided through work-related learning, both at school and off site.

27. Strategies to promote the achievement both of boys and girls are successful. For boys, these include the setting of short, carefully timed activities with quick and encouraging feedback. For girls, the mathematics department provides booster sessions to increase girls' confidence and competence in the subject.
28. Teaching has many positive features that are common to most subjects. Expectations are high. Teachers use their subject expertise to motivate students, to give clear explanations and to provide a wide variety of suitably difficult activities. Very good planning results in students in most classes knowing exactly what they have to do and why. In the best lessons, students complete the work as quickly, fully and accurately as they can. Through good discussions in groups or as a whole class, they revise and consolidate what they have learned.
29. In the lessons that were satisfactory rather than good, the teacher often talked for too long, or, as seen occasionally in religious education, directed too much of the work so that students had little chance to plan their own initiatives. Sometimes, as seen in a few ICT lessons, teachers set work that was too difficult for certain students and too easy for others. The main features of the few less than satisfactory lessons observed included low expectations and inadequate handling of unsatisfactory behaviour.
30. The good teaching of literacy, oracy and numeracy helps students to achieve well across subjects in Years 7 to 11. The good development and use of the Key Stage 3 National Strategies help students to make good progress in lessons in Years 7 to 9. The use of ICT to assist teaching and learning is satisfactory throughout Years 7 to 11. Considerable improvements in the provision of computing resources are evident, but the recent unreliability of the computing system means that students have yet to experience the fully anticipated enhancement to learning.
31. In the past two years, a fairly high turnover of teachers, recruitment difficulties and the need to use non-specialist cover teachers hindered achievement in a few subjects, particularly mathematics. The school now has a full complement of suitably qualified teachers. Consequently, as seen in mathematics, students are rapidly filling the previous gaps in their knowledge and improving their skills and understanding.
32. Procedures for assessment are good overall, including those for students with special educational needs. They help students to develop their work in all subjects. They have improved since the previous inspection and are satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 and good in Years 10 and 11. In a few subjects, including ICT and modern foreign languages, teachers' assessments of work at the end of Year 9 are not accurate enough. The school tracks the academic progress of students of all ethnic groups closely and thoroughly. It is currently, and appropriately, putting much emphasis on how teachers make best use of the information from assessment to influence what they teach. The minimum target grades set for subject departments and for students are above predictions based on students' prior attainment and encourage good achievement. Students generally know what their targets are and what to do to achieve them.
33. Marking of work is satisfactory. It varies from very good, encouraging and thorough, as in English, to barely adequate, as in ICT. Much of the classwork in science is unmarked with the consequence that students' classwork is not entirely reliable as a revision aid for examinations. The use of homework to support learning has improved and is good.
34. Teaching and learning for students with special educational needs are good and much improved since the previous inspection. All teachers now have access to good information and guidance about how best to provide for students' individual needs. Teaching assistants work closely and effectively alongside class teachers and make a valuable contribution to students' progress. The assessment, recording and reviews of the work and progress of these students are good. Records are very informative and used appropriately to set targets. The few students at an early stage of learning English receive suitable specialist help and, alongside the good support from subject teachers, make similar progress to other students.



## **Sixth form**

The quality of teaching and learning is good in Years 12 and 13. Assessment is good.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Good teaching, including much that is very good, helps students to achieve well.
- Students assist their own progress by working hard and cooperatively in class.
- In a few subjects, teachers do not make enough use of ICT to extend students' learning.

### **Commentary**

35. Teaching and learning in the sixth form have similar strengths to those identified in Years 7 to 11. They are of the same good quality as those observed in the previous inspection. In particular, teachers use their subject expertise very well to enthuse the students, to give confident and competent explanations and to encourage students to use their initiative in planning work and solving problems. They help students to acquire a good understanding of difficult concepts and to develop a good range of subject skills. Very good relationships among students and between students and teachers ensure that students have a mature approach to their studies. Teaching observed and the quality of learning were very good in English, mathematics, business studies, media studies and performing arts. They were good in art and design, general studies, health and social care, history, psychology and travel and tourism. Teaching and learning observed were satisfactory in biology, chemistry, computing and design and technology.
36. The overall quality of learning is good on AS, A2 and vocational courses because students of all ethnic backgrounds and capabilities have very positive attitudes, work hard and productively and respond positively to good encouragement from teachers. They use their above average literacy and numeracy skills to develop their work in all subjects. Low attainers receive good teaching that helps them to improve skills in communication and number. Students have limited opportunities to make the fullest use of their competent computing skills to extend their work in a few subjects. Students consolidate their learning by completing homework, coursework and other assignments conscientiously and thoroughly.
37. Assessment in the sixth form is good. It is very good in media studies and performing arts and satisfactory in design and technology, mathematics and the sciences. Students receive good feedback about their work during lessons in most subjects that helps them to make fast progress. The quality of marking is good overall but is inconsistent. In a few subjects, such as biology and chemistry, much of the work in class goes unmarked. Accordingly, these students do not always have sufficient guidance about how to improve their work and are not sure that the work is accurate enough to serve as an effective tool for revision for examinations. Good target setting raises students' expectations of what they can achieve. Close and careful monitoring of students' work ensures the early identification of underachievement. Review days involving students, tutors and parents help students to identify the steps they need to take to reach their targets. Effective use of self-assessment by students is a particular strength of vocational courses.

## **THE CURRICULUM**

The curriculum is very good. Provision is good for staffing, and satisfactory for resources and accommodation.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The very good curriculum meets the needs of students of all backgrounds in Years 7 to 13.

- Very good provision for the performing arts enriches the learning of all students.
- Work-related learning is a very positive feature of the curriculum.
- Extra-curricular activities enhance and enrich students' academic and all-round development
- Accommodation in a few subjects is inadequate and restricts the range of learning activities.

## Commentary

38. The school makes very good curricular provision to meet the needs very well of boys and girls of all the ethnic backgrounds and different capabilities. The curriculum has improved considerably since the previous inspection and reflects well the school's status as a performing arts college. It satisfies legal requirements apart from meeting statutory requirements for a daily act of collective worship. Schemes of work ensure good continuity and progression of learning. Frequent and very good monitoring of the curriculum results in students appreciating the relevance of the work set.
39. In Years 7 to 9, the programme includes all the subjects of the National Curriculum, enhanced suitably by dance and drama and through work in citizenship. The successful implementation of the national Key Stage 3 Strategies helps to improve achievement across all subjects in Years 7 to 9. It also has a positive effect on the quality of teaching and learning in Years 10 to 13, since many of the planning features and methods are present in the good or better lessons observed in those years. The course in personal, social and health education (PSHE) is very good throughout the school. The breadth and flexibility of the curriculum in all years ensure that students prepare well for their future needs.
40. In Years 10 and 11, the common core of subjects including PSHE, supplemented by students' individual choices from a wide range of courses, ensures that students keep open their continuing education, training and employment opportunities. Particularly useful features that succeed in raising achievement and promoting students' all-round development are the GCSE short courses taken by virtually all students in religious education and citizenship, which also leads to certification in key skills. The compulsory study of a modern foreign language results in nearly all students gaining a GCSE grade. Most students continue their study of subjects linked to performing arts, which has the positive effect of developing students' confidence and competence in speaking and performing.
41. The very effective and stimulating programme of work-related learning motivates students of all levels of attainment, particularly those in Years 10 to 13, to achieve their best across subjects because they understand the relevance of their current studies to their future prospects. Provision for careers education is very good. Students of all capabilities, including the gifted or talented and the few who are not as keen on school as the vast majority of students, take full advantage of the very good off-site vocational courses.
42. Students of all levels of attainment and backgrounds, including those with special educational needs and those with physical disabilities, enjoy very good access to the very wide range of subjects and activities offered. Since the previous inspection, the radical restructuring of provision for students with special educational needs has resulted in these students now receiving very good help through the very well resourced learning support centre and its specialist team. When the need arises, individual or small groups of students receive additional and appropriate support to help them to raise standards in literacy and numeracy or to improve behaviour. Students at an early stage of learning English receive effective help from visiting specialists. Other students for whom English is an additional language achieve as well as the other students because their English is competent and teachers know and cater well for their individual needs.
43. Library provision is satisfactory, though the amount of literary texts is not generous. One library serves both upper and lower school sites and is used extensively during and after school hours. Space is insufficient for peak demand so priority is, appropriately, given to GCSE groups. Library stock is up to date but there are insufficient computers to meet students'



demands. The split sites create difficulties for the running and efficiency of the library. Classes near the library make good use of it and others have to rely on book boxes.

44. The school's designation as a performing arts college has several positive effects across the curriculum. Students say, correctly, that the range of arts activities encourages social development and builds their confidence to take an active part in lessons. A much higher proportion than in most schools continues to study subjects such as music, art, dance and drama and they attain GCSE grades in these subjects. Theatre groups help students to enhance their understanding and use of the languages they study.
45. Students' active participation in a very wide range of interesting and demanding extra-curricular activities enriches and extends their learning considerably. They learn much, for example, in after-school sporting and arts activities of high quality and through exchanges, trips, visits and visitors.
46. The number and deployment of teaching and support staff meet curricular needs well. Subject departments are staffed fully with appropriately qualified teachers and support staff. Library staff are helpful and knowledgeable in their support of students and teachers. A very good programme of professional development for teaching and support staff links closely to the school's educational priorities.
47. The overall effect of accommodation on students' education is satisfactory. However, the two main buildings are reaching the end of their useful life and are inadequate for the increasing number of students on roll, as evidenced by a cluster of unattractive temporary classrooms. Pending the anticipated construction of a new school, safety has rightly taken priority over decoration. All subjects make a valuable contribution to improving the school environment through well-presented displays of work. Rooms for art and design and design and technology are spread across the split site in rooms that are often too small for the size of teaching groups. The custom-built dance studios provide a very good environment for learning, and physical education benefits from the use of very well drained and maintained playing fields.
48. Resources for teaching and learning meet curricular needs well. An ongoing programme of investment has improved ICT facilities considerably since the previous inspection. Although several subjects make good use of ICT to support teaching and learning, a few subjects such as mathematics and art and design lack adequate ICT equipment in the departments and experience problems in accessing the ICT suites. Very good resources in subjects such as music and physical education motivate students to do well.

## **Sixth form**

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- A very good and wide range of courses meets students' needs and aspirations very well.
- Extra-curricular activities support learning very effectively.

### **Commentary**

49. Although there are a few shortcomings in the use of ICT, the sixth form curriculum is very good because of the very good quality and extensive range of learning opportunities it affords all students. Since the previous inspection, many more academic and vocational opportunities are available. The curriculum provides a coherence and continuity of experience that extends from Year 9 into the sixth form. Students choose from an outstanding range of 40 subjects, accessed either through the advanced programme or the student apprentice programme. The core programme of tutorials, work-related learning, key skills, PSHE and competitive games supports both routes very effectively.

50. The flexibility of the curriculum meets students' personal needs very well and ensures equality of access and opportunity for students of all capabilities and backgrounds. Students mix and match their courses successfully. They determine their pathways to higher education, training or employment, through academic and vocational combinations that reflect their ambitions and aptitudes. The tutorial programme supports students very well, and monitors their progress well.
51. The very rich provision of extra-curricular activities and the wide-ranging community links, many of which arise from the school's designation as a performing arts college, enhance learning and promote high standards. Students believe, with justification, that they receive very good guidance and support in achieving their goals. A very positive feature is the wide range of sporting activities available to sixth formers each week when they engage in competition against other schools. Their own organisation of these activities is very good.
52. The accommodation has a satisfactory influence on the quality of teaching and learning and students' achievement. Sixth formers enjoy very much the college-like atmosphere created by the buildings at Binswood Hall, a former convent. However, the site is about one mile away from the main school sites and presents timing and transport difficulties on a very busy road for many staff commuting during the day. Subject accommodation varies greatly from well fitted out science laboratories to the dilapidated house used by art and design. Disabled access is very limited.
53. Staffing provision and resources for teaching and learning meet curricular needs well. However, shortages of textbooks in subjects such as modern languages and mathematics, and occasional problems in accessing the ICT networks hinder learning slightly.
54. The library, in a stained-glass windowed chapel, is adequate for current sixth form use but has no scope for further expansion to meet increasing demand for ICT facilities. The six computers are insufficient for demand and there are shortages of reference books for the sciences. The very good university and careers reference section and an extensive archive of newspapers and periodicals supplement the adequate book stocks.

## **CARE, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT**

Very good arrangements ensure the personal welfare of students of all backgrounds.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- A wide range of support systems and strategies ensures that appropriate help is available for all students who need it.
- Close liaison with relevant external agencies extends and enhances the support for students.
- Induction arrangements for new students, at all stages of school life, are good.

### **Commentary**

55. The very well structured pastoral system ensures that staff know students well, enabling individual needs to be identified and met appropriately. Because form tutors move through the school with their forms, they develop relationships of trust and confidence with the students. In addition, detailed knowledge of each student enables form tutors to monitor personal and academic development effectively. The system of progress review helps students and their parents to keep up to date with how well students are achieving in their schoolwork and what they need to do to improve.

56. Students have recourse to a wide range of support provided by external agencies, which work alongside school staff to offer a comprehensive range of guidance and advice. The close link with Connexions results in good information and advice on careers to complement the school's own well-planned careers programme. It provides one-to-one counselling to students who need to regain their motivation to work hard. A specialist in behaviour management works with small groups and individuals and trains volunteer students to act as mentors, so that they, too, play a part in the overall pastoral support system. A pastoral worker, sponsored by a local charity, works with individual students who have social, emotional or behavioural issues, particularly helping students in Years 7 and 8 to adjust to life at secondary school. The school has close links with the community police and with social services and calls on numerous other agencies, for example the Afro-Caribbean Society and the Sikh Temple, to tailor the support it provides to meet exactly the needs of each individual student.
57. Students and parents both praise the arrangements the school makes to ensure that settling in is an enjoyable experience, free from stress. Most students have many opportunities to visit the secondary school before they actually transfer and they meet secondary staff while still in their primary schools. An introductory day for the new Year 7 students alone allows them to find their way around. In the first few weeks, activities are designed to help students feel part of the year group. For example, citizenship lessons and assemblies that stress the importance of teamwork allow the whole year to come together in a joint exploration of a relevant issue. Students who join the school midway through the year have a 'buddy' for the first few weeks and are closely monitored by form tutors until they have found their feet.
58. The quality of care, support and guidance for students with special educational needs, including those with statements, is very good. Systems for the early identification and assessment of these students operate efficiently. Staff monitor their progress very closely and thoroughly in all years. Students with physical disabilities, including the few with wheelchairs, receive very good assistance that enables them to play a full and active part in all parts of school life. Students at an early stage of learning English receive appropriate specialist help to complement the good support they receive from subject and pastoral staff.

## **Sixth form**

59. Support and guidance in the sixth form are good. Regular and frequent progress reviews help students to identify what they need to do to ensure that they achieve their full potential. Personal advice is freely available from their tutors and students know how to seek external help, should they need it. Procedures to assist students' entry into the sixth form are particularly effective. The induction process is completed by a residential course at a local university, which new sixth form students attend before the start of term. This helps to foster team spirit and enables them to get to know one another and their tutors.

## **PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS, OTHER SCHOOLS AND THE COMMUNITY**

Links with parents are good. Very good links with the local community and with other schools and colleges contribute positively to students' achievement and personal development.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The quality and range of information for parents are very good.
- Very good links with the local community support students' learning in practical ways and give them opportunities to contribute in their turn.
- Very close links with other schools promote curricular innovation and ensure a smooth transition for primary pupils into the secondary phase.

## Commentary

60. The school communicates well with parents in many ways, providing them with a complete range of information from administrative details to progress reports on individual students. The prospectus is very well presented and is encouraging and welcoming for prospective students and their parents. Half-termly newsletters and individual letters home are written in a friendly, accessible style. A welcome pack for parents of Year 7 students contains much helpful information. Student planners provide a useful link between home and school. The school's website allows parents access to up-to-date news. Most parents take advantage of opportunities to discuss the progress that their sons and daughters are making, with very good attendance at the twice-yearly review meetings. The long written reports that parents receive vary in quality. Many are detailed, informative and personal to the student concerned, while others are general and do not set precise targets for improvement. In response to parental views, the school has instituted a parents' forum, when parents can have informal discussions with governors and staff, or benefit from presentations and debates on educational issues. The first of these proved very popular. Helpful information and advice are offered to students and their parents in relation to the choice of options after Year 9 and the next steps following Year 11. Staff are always available to discuss individual concerns and most parents find that teachers are approachable.
61. The school has many fruitful links with the local community that benefit students in practical ways. Local industry contributes to students' learning and personal development through the Education Business Partnership, which encourages employers to act as mentors for students. It also helps with the careers education and citizenship programmes by providing speakers, work experience placements and mock interviews. Many subjects have their own links with relevant sections of industry and commerce, so that students gain first hand knowledge of the practical applications of their studies. Close liaison with the community police officers helps the school in monitoring attendance, in promoting personal and road safety and in the exploration of substance abuse, behavioural management and bullying, as part of citizenship lessons. Students make their own contribution to the life of the local community by taking part in events alongside local people, such as the community orchestra and jazz band, the 'Leamington in Bloom' art competition and other local arts festivals.
62. Links with other schools and with colleges are a clear strength. The school and its staff are recognised locally as being at the forefront of new developments, setting an example to other schools and encouraging them to become involved. Joint projects that include staff training and the participation of students help both primary and other secondary schools to benefit from the expertise and commitment of North Leamington Community School. Pupils from near and far take part in the annual duathlon and triathlon events, major competitions organised by the school, which enhance its prestige. Local primary schools benefit from taking part in arts projects with staff and students from this school, enriching their learning experiences while helping them to become familiar with their future teachers and environment. Very good links with local colleges through the work-related learning programmes and with nearby universities encourage students to aspire to higher education.
63. The school has established very good relationships with parents of students with special educational needs. Parents are well informed and supportive of what the school is trying to achieve. Attendance at annual reviews is very good and the school uses an interpreter for parents who do not speak or understand English well. Very good links with outside agencies support students' learning and provide good guidance to parents. Links with feeder primary schools are generally very good in ensuring that students who require particular support receive it from the start of Year 7.
64. Sixth form students enjoy being at the school and are happy with the teaching and other opportunities offered to them. This is demonstrated by the considerable increase in student numbers since the previous inspection and by the fact that nearly all students complete the

courses on which they embark. Students like the very good relationships they have with one another and with their teachers and appreciate the opportunities they have to develop skills of independent learning. They are correct in feeling that the relaxed, adult atmosphere in which they work motivates them to try hard and do their best. The wide range of extra-curricular activities available to them is seen as a bonus and students are quick to take up opportunities to enhance their personal development, for example, through membership of the Hall Council, working with primary children or engaging in charitable fund raising. Most are happy with the resources and facilities available to them for help and advice on careers and higher education.

## LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The overall quality of leadership and management is good. The leadership of the headteacher is very good. Management is good. Governance is good.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good leadership by the headteacher, supported well by a capable governing body and senior leadership group, has resulted in very good improvement since the previous inspection.
- The school has a very good ethos that assists students' personal development.
- Good systems for monitoring performance are raising standards.
- Statutory requirements for the provision of a daily act of collective worship are not met.

### Commentary

65. As at the time of the previous inspection, the school benefits from the very good leadership of the headteacher. He works in close partnership with capable and committed governors and senior managers. Governors have a clear understanding of what the school does well and what should be improved. The headteacher and governing body set a very clear educational direction and have very high expectations of staff and students. In views expressed in questionnaires, parents and students say that the school is led and managed well. At the parents' meeting held before the inspection, parents said, justifiably, that the headteacher's leadership is a particular strength of the school.
66. The outcomes of leadership and management include many very positive features, such as rising standards, and have resulted in very good improvement since the previous inspection. A particularly impressive feature is the overall very good climate for learning that enables boys and girls of all ethnic backgrounds and different capabilities to work together harmoniously.
67. Governors carry out their responsibilities well, apart from those relating to the provision of a daily act of collective worship. They discuss matters thoroughly and engage in professional dialogue with senior and other staff as appropriate. They monitor and review the school's performance frequently and effectively.
68. Financial management is good. Systems for day-to-day management of finances work well, particularly taking into account that the school operates on split sites. Budgetary planning is good. Despite severe financial constraints, governors take care to ensure that the budget links suitably to the educational priorities of the school's improvement plan. Governors and school staff work hard to achieve best value when awarding contracts. Delay in the final decision about the building of a new school on one site means that a number of spending issues related to premises are on hold.

### Financial information

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

Income and expenditure (£)	Balances (£)
----------------------------	--------------

Total income	5,956,431	Balance from previous year	- 195,901
Total expenditure	5,885,110	Balance carried forward to the next	-124,580
Expenditure per pupil	3739		

69. The very good leadership of the headteacher is a most important factor in the school's very good ethos and continuing improvement. He is innovative and makes it very clear to students and staff what is expected of them. Recent successful developments include the establishment of a school improvement team (SIT) to seek ways of raising achievement in those subjects that do not reach the high standards usually found in English, mathematics and science. The current initiative to encourage teachers to use information about assessment more effectively is meeting success. Teachers are increasingly using this information to determine what and how to teach.
70. Leadership and management in subject departments remain good. They are important contributory factors to students' good achievement and are very good in several subjects, including English, mathematics and science. The management of the performing arts subjects is, appropriately for this specialist college, very good. The organisation of work-related learning is of high calibre and motivates students of all capabilities to work hard because they know what they need to do to prepare for life after school. Very good pastoral management ensures that students receive a very good quality of care and support. Very good leadership and management of special educational needs lead to very good coordination of the work for these students across subjects. Increased provision of support assistants and the allocation of specialist teaching assistants to subject departments have resulted in improved standards and behaviour.
71. The school has very good procedures for checking critically how well it is doing and planning for improvement. Assessments of the work of subject departments are frank and realistic. They provide staff and governors with a very good overview and pointers for development. The school improvement plan has suitable priorities for raising standards further. The good implementation of the Key Stage 3 Strategies, performance management and the effective use of other procedures for monitoring the quality of teaching and learning, succeed in sharing good practice within and across subjects. The good implementation of the national workload agreement for teachers has reduced the amount of administrative tasks carried out by teachers. It has a positive effect on the quality of teaching and learning, because teachers have more time to plan lessons and to assess work.
72. The main aids to students' achievement are: good teaching; high expectations for students' achievement and behaviour; an innovative and very good curriculum, including provision for performing arts; students' generally positive attitudes to work; very good care and support for students; and much improved provision for students with special educational needs.
73. The main barriers to raising achievement are: limited use of ICT to support learning in a few subjects; a very small amount of unsatisfactory teaching; the poor behaviour of a few students; the constraints and costs of operating on split sites; and inadequate accommodation in a few areas such as art and design.
74. Taking into account the funding received by the school, the social and economic backgrounds of students and the current quality of education and achievement, the school provides good value for money.

### **Sixth form**

The leadership and management of the sixth form are good.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Good leadership and management have contributed to very good improvements.
- The good monitoring and tracking of progress contribute to students' good achievement.
- The very good ethos in the sixth form assists students' personal development.
- Statutory requirements for the provision of a daily act of collective worship are not met.

### **Commentary**

75. Many very positive outcomes point to the overall effectiveness of leadership and management in the sixth form. Since the previous inspection, improvement is very good. Numbers on roll have virtually doubled. Standards in AS, A2 and VCE examinations continue to rise and represent good achievement. The very good curriculum now provides a much wider range of courses that caters very well for students' needs and aspirations and prepares them for life after school. Good rates of retention on courses and good attendance by students assist continuity of learning. Students of all ethnic backgrounds feel equally at home in the sixth form, as they do in the rest of the school.
76. The school has clear plans for the future direction of the sixth form. It is unable to translate these fully into action until the final decision about provision of an 11-18 school on one site is taken. The smooth running of Binswood Hall, despite staff and some students having to commute from one site to another during the day, is indicative of good organisation and planning.
77. Leadership and management of subject departments is good overall. Staff share a commitment to raise standards further and review methods of teaching regularly. Good pastoral management and teamwork ensure that students receive good support and guidance and enjoy school. The thorough tracking of students' progress and rigorous systems for identifying underachievement and tackling it ensure that achievement is good overall and that students understand how they can improve. The main aids and barriers to raising achievement in Years 12 and 13 are broadly the same as those identified for Years 7 to 11.
78. Governance of the sixth form is good, though statutory requirements for the provision of a daily act of collective worship are not met. Governors are well informed about the sixth form curriculum and its management. As at the time of the previous inspection, the costs of running a separate sixth form remain high. Even though numbers in the sixth form have increased substantially, the rest of the school subsidises slightly the overall costs of running the sixth form at Binswood Hall. However, the good achievement of sixth form students ensures that provision is cost effective.

# 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

- GCSE results are consistently high as a result of very good teaching.
- Good use of the literacy strategy helps students to speak and listen very well.
- Good assessment and tracking of progress help students to achieve very well by Year 11.
- Very good leadership and management ensure students enjoy the subject and do their best.
- Links between English and drama are not close enough to enrich students' understanding of literary texts.

#### Commentary

79. Students' achievement by Year 11 is very good compared with their slightly above average standards on entry in Year 7. In 2003, results in the national tests taken at the end of Year 9 were above average and well above those of similar schools. Results are improving faster than the national rate of improvement. Current work indicates that standards are above average by Year 9 and that achievement is good. GCSE results in 2003 were well above average and indicate very good achievement. High attainers achieved very well as indicated by the well above average proportion of GCSE A\*/A grades. Work seen shows that standards by Year 11 are currently above average in English language and well above average in English literature, and represent very good achievement overall. Throughout Years 7 to 11, boys and girls of all capabilities make similar rates of progress.
80. In Year 7, students develop good skills in literacy. By Year 11, reading and writing skills are good and skills in speaking and listening are very good. By Year 11, their ability to express ideas orally and in writing and to argue their points of view and shape arguments is good. Students' understanding of character, context and themes and their ability to recognise implicit meaning in study of literature are very good. They demonstrate good skills of critical analysis in class through discussions and individual presentations. These skills of critical analysis prepare them well for AS/A2 study. A small number of students in Years 7 to 9 with lower levels of syntax and literacy skills receive additional support through booster classes and, consequently, make the same good progress as other students.
81. Teaching and learning are good in Years 7 to 9 and very good in Years 10 and 11. Teachers use their very good subject expertise to plan individual lessons and series of lessons very well. In the best lessons, skilful and careful planning provides a wide range of interesting activities and a balance between whole-class, group, paired and individual working. As a result, all students sustain interest and concentration and work at a fast pace. Teachers explain the work and its purpose carefully and clearly so that students know what they are expected to learn and how to apply the knowledge to new situations. Accordingly, students are highly motivated to succeed. Teachers make effective use of detailed assessment to inform students of how well they are progressing and to appreciate the relevance of the work set. The department is,



appropriately, developing its assessment for learning policy further in order to ensure consistency in marking.

82. When teaching is less effective, as in a few lessons in Years 7 to 9, the lessons do not include sufficient variety; the work set does not always match the individual needs of all students. Very occasionally, when there is no additional support for those students who have both behavioural and learning difficulties, the teacher's discipline is ineffective.
83. Very good and enthusiastic leadership results in committed teamwork, which ensures that high standards are part of everyday work. The department has a collective determination to offer the students only the best. Very effective management enables the team to share good practice through frequent and regular departmental meetings. The introduction of drama as a separate subject is making a good contribution to enhancing students' learning in literature. However, links between English and drama are not close enough to ensure that students gain the best possible understanding of literary texts.
84. Improvement since the previous inspection is very good. The department has built on its previous strengths and standards are continuing to rise. It has developed its work with the library and introduced a number of effective schemes to support literacy. Staff provide good help for students who are under-performing, through such focused activities as booster classes.

### **English as an additional language**

85. A very small number of students are at the earliest stage of learning English. The achievement of these students is good and their attainment is on a par with that of the other students. They receive most of their teaching in mainstream classes and receive generally suitable care and support that enable them to integrate well. However, the assessment profiles for these students do not always contain sufficient detail to enable class teachers to provide fully effective assistance if, as occasionally happens, the support staff are not present. Most of the several other students for whom English is an additional language, who are competent in English and ready to tackle higher order language skills, receive little additional support in lessons, because not enough teaching and non-teaching staff have received training to recognise their needs. This hinders progress a little in lessons. The good attitudes and willingness of these students to work hard helps them to keep up with other students of similar capabilities.

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

86. Standards of literacy are above average across the school. In most subjects, good teaching of literacy helps students to achieve well. Higher attainers express themselves clearly and effectively, read aloud well and with very good expression. Most students, particularly boys, give confident and competent oral responses to what they have read and put forward a well-argued case. They do not always, however, structure ideas clearly in writing. In a few subjects, such as science, errors of spelling, punctuation and grammar hinder the work of lower attainers. Students that have difficulties in syntax and higher order literacy skills, receive good help, through booster classes in Years 7 to 9 This enables them to achieve as well as other students.

### **Modern foreign languages**

The focus was on French, German and Spanish. Work was sampled in Punjabi. In the Year 11 lesson observed, standards matched students' capabilities. Good teaching and students' positive attitudes resulted in good progress during this lesson.

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Achievement in GCSE examinations is good for the very large number of candidates.
- Very good leadership implements clear and effective strategies for improvement.
- Occasionally, a teacher's low expectations, or poor behaviour by a few students, hinder learning.

## Commentary

87. Standards in work seen and in teachers' assessments at the end of Year 9 are average and indicate satisfactory achievement. Almost half the students gain Level 5 or higher. At this early time in the school year, most students in Year 9 can write a paragraph in French or German and speak the foreign language in simple sentences.
88. GCSE results in 2003 were above average in French, average in German and below average in Spanish. These results represent good achievement, because a vastly higher proportion of students than found nationally sat a GCSE foreign language and nearly all students gained a grade in the range A\*-G. Currently, standards by Year 11 broadly match those attained in recent GCSE examinations and indicate good achievement overall. Most students are able to converse in the foreign language and write at length in past, future and present tenses.
89. Teaching and learning in Years 7 to 9 are satisfactory overall. They vary from very good to unsatisfactory. In the good and better teaching, purposeful planning leads to structured learning in the foreign language. Students respond well to the variety of methods that challenges them to think. Teachers' helpful and diagnostic marking shows students clearly how to improve. In the few unsatisfactory lessons, the teacher does too much of the work and does not always control behaviour suitably. In Years 10 and 11, teaching and learning are good. The careful structuring of work and activities leads to good continuity, progression and pace of learning, as observed, for example, in Year 11 in a French conversational lesson and in a Spanish class working on the future tense. Students were clear about the tasks and their relevance. Prompt and helpful marking ensured that they understood how to improve. Students benefit from good opportunities to extend their knowledge and skills in foreign languages through such activities as visits abroad and through studying an additional foreign language after school.
90. Leadership is very good and management is good. Clarity of purpose and the drive for improvement have resulted in a suitably rigorous overhaul of the department's work and good teamwork. New teaching programmes, including good use of ICT, provide staff with clear procedures and policies to improve the quality of teaching and learning. Teachers' improved access to resources, their effective use of a practical handbook and good mentoring and monitoring of students have a positive effect on students' achievement. Teachers assess students' performance thoroughly and use data to pinpoint those students needing guidance. Inconsistencies in marking still exist because there has not been time for these improvements to take full effect.
91. Improvement since the previous inspection is good. Standards are higher and the department has the capacity to make further and very good improvements.

## MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards usually represent at least good achievement, as a result of good teaching.
- Good use of starter activities in lessons and 'little and often' homework motivates students and ensures proper reinforcement of their work.
- Very good leadership and management ensure good teaching and learning overall.
- Good support strategies help to raise standards of both high and low attainers.
- Marking lacks consistency and sufficient rigour.

## Commentary

92. Results in national tests taken at the end of Year 9 in 2003 were above average. They indicated good achievement compared with students' slightly above average standards on entry in Year 7. GCSE results in the same year were above average and indicated very good achievement. As a result of recent staffing difficulties, now resolved, provisional GCSE results for 2004 showed a decline to just above the previous year's national average. In work seen, standards are currently above average by Year 9. Work observed in lessons and scrutiny of students' work shows that standards are now rising again by Year 11 and are above average. Achievement is currently good throughout Years 7 to 11 for boys and girls of all ethnic backgrounds and different capabilities.
93. Teaching and learning are currently good in Years 7 to 11 and benefit from effective use of the Key Stage 3 Strategy. Very good planning of lessons means that teachers capture all students' attention quickly and provide them with tasks and activities of good challenge and suitable difficulty. Brisk starter activities in all lessons engage the interest of students, reinforce previous work well and ensure that students consolidate and develop their skills in basic numeracy. The good deployment of learning support assistants ensures that students with special educational needs perform as well as the other students in mathematics lessons. Good systems, including booster classes, provide appropriate additional support for those students who have difficulties with mathematics. A group of high attainers enter GCSE statistics in Year 10 and achieve very well. In the past couple of years, virtually all students gained at least a C grade, the majority gaining grade A or A\* grades.
94. Teachers, for the most part, assess and track students' work and progress thoroughly. They use this information to influence what they teach and to help students to improve. However, the quality of marking is inconsistent, so that students' books are not always reliable for revision purposes. Students know their current levels of attainment and their targets, and know what they need to do to achieve them. Teachers use ICT frequently to support students' learning and to provide opportunities to practise and extend their computing skills. Students have appropriate access to ICT facilities through the booking system. Resources are generally good, but teachers have yet to exploit to the full the benefits of using ICT to enhance teaching and their presentations of work. Students consolidate their learning through good use of frequent and short homework exercises.
95. The difficulty of finding adequate replacements for staff that leave for promotion has led to a succession of supply teachers. The consequent disruption in the continuity of students' learning led to a recent falling of standards in Years 10 and 11. Very good leadership and management have ensured that an enthusiastic and well-qualified team of teachers is now in place. Although several are inexperienced, they receive good support that enables students to receive a more consistently good quality of education in mathematics and to learn well.
96. Improvement since the previous inspection is good and standards are higher. Leadership places a suitable focus on high standards. Very good management has helped the department to recover well from its recent staffing difficulties. Effective implementation of the department's equal opportunities (gender) policy has tackled successfully the former underachievement by girls. The result of the additional support and encouragement given to those girls who lacked confidence in mathematics is that there are now no significant differences between the achievements of boys and girls.

### **Mathematics across the curriculum**

97. Students' competence in mathematics is good. Suitable implementation of the whole-school numeracy policy ensures that the teaching of mathematical skills in all subjects is satisfactory or better. Students use good computational, statistical, graphical, interpretational and measuring skills competently to assist their work, particularly in science, design and technology and geography.

## SCIENCE

Provision in science is **good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- GCSE attainment is well above average and, in 2003, represented very good achievement.
- Good teaching from well-informed teachers is leading to interesting and good learning.
- Very good leadership helps the department to make important improvements.
- Too much work goes unmarked, leading to loss of motivation.

### Commentary

98. In 2003, results in the national tests taken at the end of Year 9 matched the national average but were slightly below those of similar schools. They indicated satisfactory achievement compared with the levels obtained in Year 6. Boys and girls did equally well, but the performance of the upper middle group was weaker than expected. Results show an upwards trend, but less steep than that recorded nationally. Results for 2004 were similar to those of 2003. Standards seen in the present Year 9 showed an improvement resulting from a new scheme of work and further implementation of the national Key Stage 3 Science Strategy. Although achievement is improving, it remains satisfactory. It is not as high as in Years 10 and 11, because the new and more appropriate curriculum for Years 7 to 9 has had insufficient time to have its full effect on standards. The presentation of younger students' work is not as good as that of most GCSE students.
99. GCSE results in 2003 were well above average and well above those of similar schools. They indicate that students achieved very well, because their standards were much better than expected from their Year 9 performance. The proportion of A\* and A grades was impressive. Although 2004 saw a slight decline, these students nevertheless achieved well with standards above the 2003 national average. Present standards are above average by Year 11 and represent good achievement. Boys do better than girls in science. The highest attaining students achieve very well. Taken over the past few years there is an upward GCSE trend. In all years, students with special educational needs progress well, because the quality of their support is so good.
100. The quality of teaching and learning is good. It ranges from very good to satisfactory. Teachers are knowledgeable and plan lessons effectively. They motivate classes by skilful questioning that leads to good and enjoyable learning, as students develop ideas and design experiments. The most successful lessons commence with checking, reinforcing and sharing previous knowledge and finish with testing the new learning. In the few satisfactory lessons, students were less involved. They did experiments, rather than designed them. The teachers used questions only to check learning rather than also seeking to develop topics. The overall good teaching means that most students are interested and enjoy their science. Accordingly, they behave and listen well, are involved fully in the work and learn well. However, the highest attainers occasionally receive work of insufficient challenge and difficulty to realise their potential. Assessment is satisfactory. Good features include good analysis of value-added data and effective target setting. The main shortcoming is that too much of the work goes unmarked, leading to loss of motivation and an uncertainty about how to improve.
101. Very good leadership points the way to suitable improvements and has a strong focus on raising achievement. Good management results in an effective and cohesive team of good teachers. Thorough analysis of examination results has led to new schemes of work and a wider range of strategies, especially in the use of computers by the students and for teaching. The consequence of this has been very good improvement since the previous inspection, endorsed by the higher standards.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Unsatisfactory management results in inadequate assessment and marking of students' work.
- Standards are beginning to rise but previous GCSE results indicated underachievement.
- Students use their good understanding of presenting information effectively in many subjects.

### **Commentary**

102. Teachers' assessments at the end of Year 9 recently showed that standards were below the national average. Recent procedures for assessment lacked rigour and consistency so these assessments are not reliable. In 2003, GCSE results in ICT were well below the national average. They indicated satisfactory achievement overall because the proportion of students sitting the examination was five times the national proportion. Provisional GCSE results for 2004 show an improvement for the large numbers entering and were much closer to the previous year's national average. Boys' achievement at GCSE is better than that of girls.
103. Although students' previous ICT experience is varied, most enter the school in Year 7 with average knowledge in the subject. Standards by Year 9 are currently average. They represent satisfactory achievement. Students successfully use their good skills of presenting information using a wide range of applications to present their work. They have an adequate understanding of how to use control technology but lack a good awareness of its application to solve practical problems. Students studying the GCSE course are currently on target to reach average standards in the examination. Achievement is satisfactory by Year 11. Students have completed the spreadsheet assignment and have developed a competent knowledge of its use and the appropriate formulae for mathematical calculations. Higher attainers make effective use of more complex procedures such as validation, a method used to check that the information entered is correct.
104. Teaching and learning overall are satisfactory. Suitable implementation of the National Strategy for ICT helps to provide a balanced curriculum. The planning, however, does not always result in work of enough challenge and difficulty. Consequently, progress is slower than expected on occasions, because teachers do not take sufficient account of students' previous knowledge. When students have a clear understanding of what they are expected to learn, they make good progress in lessons. However, in a few lessons, teachers do not make clear to students what the purpose of the lesson is. As a consequence, they do not attract students' interest at the beginning of a lesson and students are slow to start the task, leading to slower understanding. Teaching is better when teachers give a clear demonstration at the beginning of the lesson, questioning students about the task to ascertain their understanding before starting the task. A strength of the teaching is the effective use of teacher's expertise to support and guide the GCSE students and raise standards.
105. Leadership of the subject is satisfactory. Management, however, is unsatisfactory. The monitoring and evaluation of students' work lack consistency and rigour. Although assessment has improved recently, many students do not know the levels they are achieving or how to improve their work. The marking of students' work is inconsistent and often ineffective. Teachers do not have portfolios of work to guide moderation. Improvement since the previous inspection is satisfactory. The large increase in ICT resources is beginning to have a more positive effect on learning, despite the present unreliability of some of the systems.

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

106. Students have competent ICT skills that are sufficient to meet the curricular needs across subjects. The use of ICT by teachers and students to support and extend work across the curriculum is satisfactory. A few subjects do not utilise the computing facilities enough to enrich learning. Many subjects make imaginative and constructive use of ICT to enhance teaching and to motivate students to develop and apply their competent computing skills in new situations. Students benefit from many good opportunities to use a wide range of ICT skills to enrich and extend their learning in subjects such as science, music and modern foreign languages. On occasions, students' progress slows because access to the well-used computer suites is limited. The current unreliability of parts of the computing network frustrates faster progress.

## **HUMANITIES**

### **Geography**

Provision in geography is **very good**.

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

- Very good leadership and management are very effective in improving standards.
- Good teaching helps students to achieve well in Years 7 to 9 and very well in Years 10 and 11.
- Fieldwork provides very effective learning and promotes very good achievement.
- The little use of ICT restricts learning opportunities.

#### **Commentary**

107. GCSE results in 2003 were above average. Results in 2004 improved considerably. More students met or exceeded expected levels of attainment and students did better in geography than in many other subjects.

108. Currently, standards by Year 9 are above average and achievement over Years 7 to 9 is good. This is due to good teaching and students' positive attitudes to learning. Students have a very good grounding in geographical skills. Most use and interpret maps and graphs well. Knowledge of place is very good. Gifted students receive work of appropriate challenge and difficulty that encourages them to work hard. Students with special educational needs achieve satisfactorily. They often make the same good progress as other students. They make slower progress when they lack the benefit of additional learning support, because they experience difficulties managing complex tasks. There is no significant difference between the progress of boys and girls or between students of ethnic groupings. However, the achievement of a small number of boys in Years 10 and 11 who lack the high motivation of others is satisfactory rather than better. By Year 11 standards are now well above average. Achievement in Years 10 and 11 is very good. This is due to consistently good teaching with high expectations and generally well-motivated students. The best GCSE projects for independent study are of exceptionally high quality.

109. Teaching and learning are good overall. Management and control in lessons are generally good. The poor behaviour of a small number of boys in Years 7 to 9 very occasionally hinders the learning of others. Teaching strengths include very good planning, well-structured and interesting lessons, positive engagement of students in active learning and the use of a good range of teaching methods. Students have good speaking skills but, in a few lessons, have insufficient opportunities to engage in oral and group enquiry work. Teachers make good use of assessment data to influence what they teach and to track students' progress. However, day-to-day marking of work in Years 7 to 9 lacks consistency so that students do not always know how to improve their work.

110. Very good leadership and management place a suitably strong emphasis on raising standards. The new leadership benefits from the helpful support provided by the previous subject

leadership and the committed work of an experienced and highly qualified team. Very good curricular planning recognises the need to focus more precisely on knowledge, understanding and skills. Difficulty of access to computer facilities has prevented the ICT programme being implemented fully. Fieldwork undertaken provides very effective learning and greatly stimulates students' interest in the subject. Overall improvement since the previous inspection is good and standards continue to rise.

## History

Provision in history is **satisfactory**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Recent GCSE results have been well below average and show unsatisfactory achievement.
- Good teaching now ensures effective planning and involves students actively.
- Standards of work seen are rising and indicate satisfactory achievement by Year 11.
- Assessment does not give students enough information about their current standards.
- Students do not use ICT enough to assist independent learning.

### Commentary

111. In recent years, teachers' assessments of students' work in history by the end of Year 9 show that standards were above average. Work in current classes indicates similarly above average standards by Year 9 and represent good achievement compared with students' broadly average levels of attainment in history on entry in Year 7. Students develop good key historical skills of handling sources, recognising bias and understanding change. Recent GCSE results have been well below average. Even taking full account of the above average proportion of students sitting the GCSE examination, these recent results indicate unsatisfactory achievement, particularly among higher attainers. Current work seen in Years 10 and 11 show a good improvement in standards, that indicates that students are on target overall to gain at least average GCSE grades at the end of Year 11. Achievement in these classes is now satisfactory for students of all levels of prior attainment. Students with special educational needs make good progress in lessons because they have good support and work that suits their individual capabilities.
112. The current rise in standards and achievement is the result of improved teaching and learning. Teachers have a good command of their subject, explain issues very clearly and organise lively discussions that involve students and enhance learning. As a result of high expectations and well-planned lessons boys and girls achieve equally well, as do students from ethnic minorities and those with special educational needs. Relationships are positive in class and assist good progress. Teachers deal swiftly and effectively with the occasional instances of inappropriate behaviour by a few students.
113. Despite some useful marking with helpful comments on how students could improve, assessment overall focuses insufficiently on National Curriculum levels and GCSE grades. Whilst teachers encourage students to learn independently through homework, they make insufficient use of ICT to develop students' capacity to learn outside the classroom. The range of stimulus materials in class is too narrow to enhance to the full students' enjoyment of history.
114. The new leadership and management are good and are having an immediate and positive effect on the quality of teaching and learning. The school has focused on the department as a key area for raising achievement and, with the new leadership, has established suitable priorities, including revision of schemes of work and syllabuses, reviewing assessment and developing a collaborative approach to teaching.
115. Improvement since the previous inspection is satisfactory. Planning has improved and teachers are now sharing resources and ideas to the benefit of students. Although GCSE results declined considerably recently, the department has the clear capacity to remedy this.





## Religious education

Provision in religious education is **good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- GCSE results represent good achievement for students of all backgrounds and capabilities.
- Good teaching in Years 10 and 11 enables students to learn and achieve well.
- In Years 7 to 9, students develop insufficient skills of independent learning and research.

### Commentary

116. By Year 9, standards are average, and achievement is satisfactory. Results in the GCSE short course examination match the national average. They indicate good achievement because virtually all students obtain a GCSE grade. Standards of work seen in Year 11 are similar to those shown in the GCSE examination. Boys and girls of all levels of prior attainment achieve well by Year 11, because of good teaching and the positive attitudes they bring to lessons. Students with special educational needs and those from minority ethnic and faith backgrounds achieve well because teachers ensure that they play a full and active part in lessons.

117. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 and good in Years 10 and 11. In the best lessons, teachers have a very good grasp of their subject and clear aims that they share with students. They plan well to achieve their objectives, and challenge students with a wide variety of interesting activities and tasks that match their individual needs well. Teachers have high expectations, and engender very good relationships in the classroom. They set worthwhile homework that extends the learning in lessons, and mark work conscientiously and supportively.

118. Where learning is less effective, mainly in Years 7 to 9, teaching is sometimes too directive in style, and students have too little responsibility for their own learning. Teachers also miss opportunities to review students' progress with them at the end of lessons. The subject makes a positive contribution to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students of all backgrounds. It helps students to acquire a suitable understanding of rights and responsibilities of citizens living in a multicultural society.

119. Good leadership provides a clear vision of how to raise standards further. Good management has resulted in good improvement since the previous inspection. Results in the GCSE short course have risen substantially. The school now meets statutory requirements for the provision of religious education in all years.

## TECHNOLOGY

### DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

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

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching and learning lead to above average GCSE results.
- The scheme of work in Years 7 to 9 provides too few opportunities for open-ended design.
- Good leadership and management result in improvements being implemented.
- Teachers successfully encourage students' independent learning.
- Students' sketching skills are poor and they do not always show how their designs develop.

## Commentary

120. In the past two years, teachers' assessments indicate that standards were below average at the end of Year 9. Currently, standards of work seen show that standards are average by Year 9. They represent satisfactory achievement for boys and girls of all backgrounds and capabilities compared with students' broadly average levels of attainment on entry in Year 7. In Years 7 to 9 students experience a very broad range of materials and processes, but not computer control. They do not develop and apply sketching skills well. They sometimes model their ideas, but do not always show how their design ideas develop. Students with special educational needs make good progress in lessons because they receive good help.
121. In 2003, GCSE results were well above average and students did as well as they did in their other subjects. Boys did less well than girls. Provisional results in 2004 show a slight fall. Results remained very high in textiles and food technology, broadly average in product design courses but were very low in electronics, in which there were staffing difficulties. Standards of current work by Year 11 are above average and show good achievement. In manufacturing, students learn much about industrial practice and manufacturing processes. In product design, students find the work relevant and interesting, because it is usually related to the needs of a commercial setting or client base. Students do not yet use ICT to support their work or research as widely as they might. Achievement is good because teachers help students to organise their coursework studies. In food, students argue the case for product development well, and generally, the emerging application of computer-aided design is helping design development. Students do not consistently evaluate their work in sufficient depth. The lower achievement of boys links to the previous lack of ICT facilities across design and technology and recent staffing difficulties in electronics.
122. Teaching and learning in Years 7 to 11 are good overall. In manufacturing, external visits reinforce students' learning. Teachers encourage students' independent self-learning. They provide suitable and interesting activities to stretch the highest attainers and provide good individual support, when required, to students of all capabilities. Good focus on product analysis helps students to develop criteria for design. In Years 7 to 9, students' workbooks are a positive aid to structured learning and ensure good use of the time available for designing and making. In Years 10 and 11, teachers use their very good subject knowledge to enable students to gain a good understanding of the correct application of processes and technical vocabulary.
123. The new and good leadership sets clear and appropriate priorities for improvement. Good management ensures the smooth running of the subject despite accommodation being located in a number of different areas. Frequent and regular assessment in Years 10 and 11 provides students with good information about their work and progress on GCSE courses. In Years 7 to 9, assessment does not indicate clearly enough how well students are doing in relation to National Curriculum levels. The curriculum in Years 7 to 9 does not provide enough work of suitable difficulty for open-ended design. The acquisition of new laptop computers means that the application of ICT and computer-assisted design is developing rapidly.
124. Improvement is satisfactory since the previous inspection. While standards have improved overall, differences in attainment and achievement remain between subject areas. ICT resources have improved recently, but its application to students' work is only just starting to develop. Students' sketching skills are still weak. Food technology rooms have improved considerably.

## VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

The focus was on art and design and music. Work was sampled in drama, which is taught as a separate subject in Years 7 to 9, and as an optional subject in Years 10 and 11. Work was also sampled in **dance**, as part of the performing arts programme. In the lessons observed, standards were well above average and indicated very good achievement. The teaching ranged from good to

excellent and students were making very good progress. Students benefit from the high level of expertise of dance tutors as well as the range of classes and out-of-hours activities that are available to them.

## Art and design

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

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching, including some that is excellent, promotes good achievement.
- Very good leadership and management set a clear direction for the department.
- Very good curricular planning gives a good balance of instruction and independent learning.
- Unsatisfactory accommodation restricts GCSE activities.
- Inadequate ICT resources restrict students' achievement.

### Commentary

125. Students enter Year 7 with very varied experiences of art and design and overall standards are below average. Achievement over Years 7 to 9 is good, so that standards are average by the end of Year 9. In the past two years, teachers' assessments show standards were average at the end of Year 9, with girls attaining higher than boys. Students demonstrate competent skills in drawing and painting and experience of a good variety of media. The range of attainment remains wide, reflecting inconsistencies in provision in recent years through considerable staffing changes. Students of all capabilities and backgrounds achieve equally well as a result of good attention to individuals' needs.
126. GCSE results in 2003 were below average, but provisional results for 2004 were very close to the previous year's national average. Girls attain much higher than boys. The proportion of students taking GCSE art and design is twice the national average and candidates are from a wide range of prior attainment. By Year 11, standards are average overall showing good achievement for the large numbers taking the subject. Museum and gallery visits lead to well-displayed research work though only a few students write confidently about artists and artefacts.
127. The quality of teaching and learning is good. In Years 7 to 9, newly devised foundation projects give students a common experience of materials and techniques that provides a very good platform for future development. Good preparation of lessons ensures the effective use of the time available. Examples of excellent teaching were seen in Year 7 generating very high levels of students' involvement and motivation. In Years 10 and 11, teaching is clear and informative, with well-prepared support materials that help students to work independently in exploring materials and techniques. The number of students in GCSE groups is too large for the studios and restricts opportunities to work on large-scale projects. Insufficient computers in the studios and inadequate memory in the ICT suites for image manipulation slow students' learning and application of ICT skills.
128. Leadership and management are very good. The introduction of new schemes and procedures, with the full support and involvement of the team, ensures that standards continue to rise. Appropriate delegation of responsibilities makes very effective use of the team's very good range of specialist expertise. New courses address the need to improve boys' performance. Improvement since the previous inspection is satisfactory and the department has the capacity and commitment for further improvements.

## Drama

129. GCSE results are well above average in drama. Students value the subject because they find learning is fun and enriching. They achieve well by Year 9 and very well by Year 11. Students of all capabilities develop good skills in researching the social and historical contexts of drama texts. They understand the technical and practical aspects of stagecraft, such as movement, gesture and expression. Students interpret character and theme and evaluate their own

performance with insight. In lessons seen, students showed very good gains in knowledge and understanding in the practical skills integral to the subject.

130. Teachers use their wide-ranging subject knowledge very well to plan lessons that balance practical activity with whole-class teaching. Students' perceptive evaluations of their own work and that of others assist their learning. Where teaching is excellent, the lesson includes practical activities in short and very effective bursts that help students to develop such skills as relaxation, concentration, voice control and projection. The teacher uses clear explanations and demonstrations to illustrate key learning points. Students collaborate very well with one another and with the teacher, and enjoy working independently, enthusiastically and conscientiously to improve their dramatic skills. Very good leadership demonstrates a strong vision of how the subject should contribute to students' personal and social development. Drama makes a very good contribution to the school's success as a performing arts college and numbers taking GCSE have increased considerably.

## **Music**

Provision in music is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Emphasis on developing students' rhythmic skills contributes positively to their performances.
- Teachers have good practical skills that are contributing to students' achievement.
- When lessons are only about theory, students often lose interest.

## **Commentary**

131. Teachers' assessments at the end of Year 9 in 2004 indicate that standards were above the previous year's national average. These results are generous and not a true reflection of students' attainment. GCSE results in 2003 were close to the national average. They indicated good achievement for the well above average proportion of students entered. The 2004 results, however, are not quite as high. These lower results are partially due to staffing problems in the past that have now been resolved.
132. Students join the school with skills that are below average in music overall. With the benefit of good teaching, boys and girls of all backgrounds and capabilities achieve well so that, by the time they reach Year 9, standards are average. Students' rhythmic skills are good, contributing positively to their performance skills that are well established. Students have a competent knowledge of basic composing techniques but skills are not as well established as their performance. The contributory reason for this is that, in the past, there has been a greater emphasis on performance. This has now been remedied with a greater focus on composition. In Years 10 and 11, the good achievement continues and standards of students studying the GCSE course are at the expected level at this point in the academic year. Students use ICT music programs effectively to enhance their creative skills.
133. The overall quality of teaching and learning is good. Teachers have a good range of specialist skills and use them effectively to demonstrate musical sequences that contribute positively to students' learning and understanding. Learning is better when activities in lessons have a practical basis. This approach engages students' interest quickly, leading to good progress. Learning is slower when teaching is only about the theory of music and does not engage the students actively. The outcome of this is that students experience difficulty transferring the knowledge to their practical activities. Listening skills are better developed when the focus at the beginning of the lesson is on appraising music.
134. The good acting leadership of the subject has a clear vision and suitable priorities for the future developments of music in the school. It provides good support to staff and students and is a positive role model for colleagues. The very recent revision and rewriting of schemes of work have helped to raise standards and to enable students now to regard music as a worthwhile

activity. Management is satisfactory, but there is not enough monitoring of teaching to share good practice or sufficiently rigorous analysis of examination results to promote higher standards.

135. The wide range of extra-curricular activities contributes positively to students' achievement, offering challenging musical experiences for higher attaining and talented students. The use of assessment is at an early stage of development and has yet to have a full effect on raising standards. Improvement since the previous inspection is good. The department plays a suitable part in the school's successful development as a performing arts college.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

### **Physical education**

Provision in physical education is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Good teaching, including some that is excellent, helps to raise standards to above average.
- Very good assessment informs students well and helps to match work to individual needs.
- Very good extra-curricular sporting provision complements a broad and balanced curriculum.
- Dirty indoor accommodation is a potential health and safety hazard.

### **Commentary**

136. In 2003, teachers' assessments at the end of Year 9 showed that standards were above average. The 2004 assessments indicate similar standards. In current work, standards are above average by Year 9 and indicate good achievement compared with students' broadly average standards in physical education on entry in Year 7. GCSE results in 2003 were slightly above average and indicated good achievement, even though students did not perform quite as well in physical education as they did in most of their other subjects. Provisional GCSE results in 2004 were slightly above the previous year's national average and represent good achievement. Standards of work seen were above average by Year 11 on both the GCSE course and the compulsory course.

137. Throughout Years 7 to 11, boys and girls enjoy physical education. Their enthusiasm for the subject helps students of all backgrounds and capabilities quickly to acquire competent basic skills in a range of games including badminton, tennis, football and rugby as well as in gymnastics. They are confident when working together with others and support and encourage each other very well. Teachers make safety a prime concern and students learn to exercise proper care in all activities.

138. Students taking the GCSE course in physical education and sports studies develop very good theoretical knowledge, which gives them in-depth understanding about the functions of their bodies and components of fitness. They make very good use of ICT in these lessons. Students with special educational needs receive very good support that assists their good progress. In many cases, their competent physical skills compensate for other learning difficulties.

139. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall. A team of well-qualified specialists produces good teaching throughout the school. At times, teaching is very good and is occasionally excellent. In all lessons, very effective planning and preparation of resources give students a clear understanding of what they should learn and why. Students increase their knowledge and understanding through many very good opportunities to evaluate their own efforts and those of others. However, opportunities for students to plan their own learning are limited. The use of assessment is a very positive feature of this department. Effective use of the good recording of students' performances ensures good planning of work to match

students' group and individual needs. The very good provision of extra-curricular sporting activities enhances the performing skills of boys and girls of all levels of attainment. Students value highly these enrichment activities that promote their social development very well.

140. Good leadership and management have accomplished a great deal in terms of raising standards and bringing about good improvement since the previous inspection. Low standards of cleanliness in indoor working spaces have implications for health and safety.

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

The focus was on work in citizenship. Work-related learning was sampled.

### **Citizenship**

Provision in citizenship is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Standards are above average and achievement is good as a result of good teaching.
- Teachers manage discussion in class skilfully.
- The very good planning and resources for the course motivate students to work hard.
- There is insufficient reference to citizenship in other subjects of the curriculum.

### **Commentary**

141. All students in Years 7 to 11 have a single lesson in citizenship every week. Standards of work observed were above average in Years 7 to 9, largely because of the good verbal contributions of students. Students enter for the short course GCSE examination in citizenship and results in 2003 and in 2004 were below average. However, the unusual policy of entering almost all Year 11 students for an examination in citizenship meant that a far larger number of students achieved a GCSE grade in the subject than in most schools. Standards by Year 11 currently indicate that students are on course to attain above average GCSE results and are achieving well.
142. Achievement in citizenship is currently good throughout Years 7 to 11 for students of all capabilities, including those with special educational needs and the few at an early stage of learning English. This is the result of good teaching and learning. Teachers value the subject and plan their lessons well, and students respond positively. Lively teaching techniques such as discussion groups with well-established rules, role-playing and game playing to learn about issues such as world trade motivate students to participate actively. Students enjoy the lessons, encourage each other in discussions and listen to each other's views with respect.
143. Although the timetabled lessons in citizenship are effective in promoting good achievement, students do not always have enough opportunities to extend their knowledge and appreciation of citizenship issues in other subjects. Very effective leadership and management support good teaching. Comprehensive schemes of work and programmes of study and an excellent resource bank motivate students to learn well. Increased emphasis on coursework for current Year 11 students is helping to raise standards. Teachers benefit from good in-service training. The department is, suitably, seeking accreditation for the subject at Year 9 in order to raise its profile further.
144. The department continues to make very good improvement. The use of outside speakers, including representatives of the police and disabled groups, and the good participation of students in the Student Parliament enrich the citizenship programme.



## Work-related learning

145. Very good leadership and coordination ensure that boys and girls of all ethnic backgrounds benefit from a coherent programme that combines careers education and guidance, PSHE, citizenship and work-related learning. Work-related learning courses in Years 10 and 11, taught in conjunction with local colleges, motivate students to achieve well across subjects. Good teaching and facilities on these courses match students' individual needs very well. Large numbers of students, of all levels of attainment, benefit from using facilities at local colleges that are often excellent, as in engineering, and which encourage them to learn rapidly and effectively. Students value the well-organised placements on work experience that give them a good awareness of the skills needed for work. In the work seen in Years 10 and 11, students' achievement is good overall. It is very good in college-based courses. Monitoring of students' progress is very good. Students on college-based courses miss one day or more a week of other lessons, which they have to make up in study periods. They say, with justification, that these experiences help them to develop independence. Students' attitudes to work-related learning are very good.

## SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM

In the inspection, 15 subjects and courses were inspected and are reported on in detail. Work in other subjects and courses was sampled and contributed to the overall picture of teaching and learning in the school.

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

### *Level 3 GCE 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	25	80.0	80.1	52.0	23.7	42.8	29.9
Biology	20	70	65.2	20.0	11.1	21.0	20.6
Chemistry	9	77.8	72.7	33.3	13.9	32.2	24.1
Computing	9	66.7	86.4	22.2	23.8	30.0	32.0
Dance	9	100	86.9	22.2	35.0	28.9	35.5
Design	9	77.8	74.9	22.2	15.1	20.0	25.3
Drama	24	100	86.5	45.8	19.6	44.6	30.6
Economics	16	68.8	73.6	25.0	20.1	27.5	26.4
English language	26	92.3	82.9	34.6	17.5	33.5	28.7
English literature	43	95.4	85.9	23.3	19.1	27.7	30.2
Environmental science	7	57.1	71.4	14.3	15.8	14.3	24.3
French	1	100	78.2	0	18.9	30.0	27.6
Geography	24	75.0	74.3	37.5	19.8	30.8	26.5
German	7	100	81.5	28.6	19.3	40.0	28.9
General studies	107	64.5	73.9	12.2	17.8	19.6	25.7
Health and social care ASVCE	7	85.7	N/a	42.9	N/a	45.7	N/a

History	27	81.5	80.7	22.2	19.5	25.6	28.6
Mathematics	34	85.3	61.9	41.2	17.1	37.4	22.1
Media studies	32	100	86.4	34.4	23.8	35.3	32.0
Music	11	90.9	86.5	9.1	21.4	27.3	30.7
Music technology	11	63.6	N/a	9.1	N/a	18.2	N/a
PE studies	14	92.9	73.2	7.1	11.4	19.3	23.1
Physics	26	84.6	68.6	38.5	14.4	39.2	22.7
Politics	11	100	69.7	36.4	16.7	33.6	24.1
Psychology	59	91.5	N/a	23.7	N/a	28.3	N/a
Religious studies	12	83.3	80.2	8.3	22.6	19.2	29.8
Sociology	16	87.5	71.8	25.0	18.4	33.1	25.4
Spanish	4	100	78.5	0	17.7	20.0	27.3

### **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	15	93.3	98.6	33.3	50.2	68.0	87.5
Biology	12	100	96.4	8.3	39.2	65.0	78.6
Business studies VCE	20	100	65.0	30	14.6	79.0	60.1
Chemistry	7	100	97.6	28.6	49.0	74.3	84.9
Communication studies	17	100	99.4	52.9	37.8	87.1	82.1
Computing	7	85.7	95.6	14.3	24.6	57.1	69.5
Dance	3	100	98.5	33.3	44.9	80.0	83.9
Design and technology	4	100	97.8	0	35.0	50.0	77.9
Economics	6	100	98.9	33.3	52.0	86.7	88.3
English language	17	100	99.4	17.9	36.3	75.0	80.9
English literature	27	100	99.5	18.5	46.5	75.6	86.5
French	2	100	98.8	50	51.5	80.0	87.6
Geography	17	100	98.7	64.7	44.5	92.9	84.0
German	5	100	98.4	40.0	47.9	88.0	84.8
General studies	27	100	94.7	25.9	31.0	77.0	73.1
Health and social care VCE	16	100	67.7	29.0	14.5	70.3	63.5
History	14	100	99	28.6	44.6	80.0	84.6
Mathematics	18	100	96.7	50	55.6	87.8	88.8
Music	4	100	98.8	50	38.9	80.0	81.1
Other sciences	7	100	97.3	14.3	41.5	62.9	80.3
Other social studies	34	97.1	97.4	35.3	42.7	80.0	81.8
Performing arts VCE	8	75	87.3	75	42.2	102.9	77.8

Physics	10	90	96.7	30	44.6	74.0	81.7
Religious studies	6	100	98.8	16.7	46.7	80.0	85.6
Sociology	2	100	98.2	50	44.3	80.0	83.6
Spanish	2	100	98.3	100	50.2	110.0	86.9
Sports/PE studies	4	100	98.0	25	30.9	85.0	75.2

***Level 2 vocational qualifications***

Qualification	No in final year	% gaining qualification		% gaining merit		% gaining distinction	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Business studies	6	100	N/a	16	N/a	0	N/a
Health and social care	6	83	N/a	0	N/a	0	N/a
Leisure and tourism	5	100	N/a	20	N/a	0	N/a

## ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

The focus was the provision for AS/A2 courses in English language and literature. Work was sampled in French and German. In the two lessons seen, the small number of students were making good progress and gaining in confidence as a result of teachers using their expertise in the foreign language to motivate them to do well.

### ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE

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

#### Main strengths and weaknesses

- AS/A2 results are well above average, indicating very good achievement.
- Very good teaching helps students to develop very good critical and analytical skills.
- Very good leadership helps teachers and students to work with enthusiasm and commitment.
- Teachers make little use of ICT to promote teaching and learning.

#### Commentary

146. Standards match those of most sixth forms on entry in Year 12 and rise to above average by the end of Year 12. Standards are usually above average by the end of Year 13. Standards in current classes are well above average. They indicate very good achievement that is a result of very good teaching and planning. The progress of a few relatively lower attaining students is less rapid, but students of all social and ethnic backgrounds achieve equally very well overall.
147. AS/A2 results were a little below average in 2003. Provisional results for 2004 show a substantial improvement with results that were above the previous year's national averages and represent very good achievement for the large number of candidates involved.
148. Teaching and learning are very good. Lessons proceed at a fast pace. The subject knowledge of the teachers is very good. It motivates students, particularly in Year 13, to engage in discussion and debate at a high level. Students work independently and conscientiously, shaping their ideas and opinions and debating among themselves. They challenge each other to defend opposing points of view. Students in Year 12 are a little less confident but early indications are that they are developing similarly high skills. Critical analysis of literary text is very good, showing subtlety and awareness of ambiguity and moral complexity in their study. This was particularly obvious in a lesson on *Othello*, in which the group considered the character of Iago as seen through the eyes of other characters.
149. Assessment is very effective. Students know their learning targets and what to do to reach them. They collaborate very well in lessons and work hard in their own time to read and to research the social and historical contexts of literary texts and to develop their ideas and their notes.
150. Very good leadership and management have ensured very good improvements, particularly in standards, since the previous inspection. They provide very good support and guidance to help students, including those who come from other schools, to make the transition from Year 11 into Year 12 very well. Traditional resources for learning such as textbooks, flipcharts and whiteboards are readily available to support learning. The department does not currently make enough use of newer technologies, such as access to digital projection facilities to aid presentation, and the Internet to support research.

#### Language and literacy across the curriculum

151. Above average standards of literacy and oracy in Years 12 and 13 enable students of all ethnic backgrounds to achieve well across subjects. Students communicate their knowledge of subjects clearly in their written work. They read fluently with good comprehension and use reading skills such as scanning to good effect. Most are confident and very competent speakers and enjoy participating in discussions. All subjects make suitable provision for the development of literacy skills. Teachers place a good emphasis on the correct use of technical vocabulary.

## **MATHEMATICS**

The focus of the inspection was on AS and A2-level work in mathematics.

### **Mathematics**

Provision in mathematics is **very good**.

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

- Standards attained are usually well above average and represent very good achievement.
- Teaching is very good because teachers know their subject very well.
- The wide variety of courses on offer enables all students to achieve very well.
- Marking is of inconsistent quality.

#### **Commentary**

152. Standards on entry to the AS/A2 courses are slightly above those found nationally. Very good teaching ensures very good learning with standards rising to well above average by the end of Year 13.

153. In 2003, AS results were above average and A2 results broadly average. Taking into account students' prior GCSE performances, the results indicated good achievement overall. Provisional results for 2004 were well above the previous year's national averages for AS and A2. They represent very good achievement for the sizeable number of candidates. Standards are currently well above average by Year 3 and indicate continued very good achievement.

154. The good variety of modules of study motivates students to succeed in mathematics. As a result, they gain very good skills, knowledge and understanding of the basic mathematics needed at this level and for future higher education. They reach high standards, equivalent to A2 level, in pure mathematics by the end of Year 12, through intensive study of that course. They enhance this through suitably challenging work throughout Years 12 and 13 in core mathematics, mechanics and statistics. A small group of high attainers are enriching and extending their work through studying further mathematics at A2 level. Very good links with a local university facilitate the teaching and learning in the further mathematics module.

155. Teachers have a thorough knowledge of the subject material and are imaginative in its presentation. The very good teaching motivates students very well and as a result, they are enthusiastic and achieve very well. Students develop very good learning skills, working independently or within small groups as appropriate. Although the assessment of students' work to set targets and to influence the teaching is good, marking is of inconsistent quality and does not always show students how to improve or serve as a good tool for revision.

156. The very good leadership and management of the department have ensured that improvement is good since the previous inspection and that standards and achievement continue to improve.

#### **Mathematics across the curriculum**

157. Most students have above average standards in numeracy, which they use well to support their work across subjects. Students entering the sixth form without a grade C or above in GCSE mathematics have the good choice of either re-sitting GCSE to endeavour to raise their grade to C or above, or of studying the Level 2 key skills course in numeracy. Teaching of both of these courses is very good. Consequently, students readily acquire the mathematical skills they need to make appropriate progress in their other studies.

## **SCIENCE**

The focus of the inspection was the provision for AS/A2 courses in biology and chemistry.

## **BIOLOGY**

Provision in biology is **satisfactory**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- In the best lessons, students' active involvement helps them to make good progress.
- Students' positive attitudes and behaviour assist their learning.
- A narrow range of teaching methods and insufficient use of ICT restrict learning.
- Insufficient attention to improving students' skills in note-taking limits progress.

### **Commentary**

158. AS and A2 results in 2003 were below average and indicated underachievement. Provisional results for 2004 show a good improvement because A2 results broadly matched the previous year's national average and AS results were above it. Over the past three years, students' achievement was satisfactory overall in relation to their prior GCSE attainment. The numbers taking biology at A2 are low, but the rate of retention is good.

159. Currently, standards in Year 12 and Year 13 are average. They indicate satisfactory achievement overall for students of different ethnic backgrounds and capabilities. Students work hard and are positive in their approach to the work. They made very good progress in those lessons observed in which very good teaching demanded much of them. The activities challenged them to think clearly for themselves and to use their initiative. In other lessons they take in information but do little with it. For example, the questioning of Year 13 students about work covered during their previous lesson indicated an inadequate understanding of the process of respiration. When questioned on other aspects of the syllabus, they demonstrated a satisfactory understanding of basic facts and concepts. Analysis of students' files indicates that most are well organised, with care taken over the copying up of notes.

160. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. In the best lessons, teachers use their subject knowledge very well to probe students' understanding with assignments such as 'Explain why beta glucose gives cellulose its considerable strength and stability'. The few high attainers cope well with the additional challenge of considering areas beyond the main lesson content. When teaching is just satisfactory, planning concentrates more on covering the content than ensuring that students gain a good understanding. Accordingly, in these lessons, students have few opportunities to apply their knowledge, speculate, argue a case or ask questions. Analysis of work indicates that teachers do not check sufficiently students' understanding or the quality of their note-taking. Marking is inconsistent and does not always provide clear indications of how well students are doing. There is little use of ICT for research, for data analysis or for developing techniques in data logging.

161. Satisfactory leadership and management have a commitment to improving standards. The monitoring of teaching and learning, however, is insufficient to enable a sharing of the very good practice that exists within the department. Schemes of work make little reference to the development of key skills, including ICT. Improvement since the previous inspection is satisfactory.

## CHEMISTRY

Provision in chemistry is **satisfactory**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- In 2003, A2 results were below average and represented unsatisfactory achievement.
- AS results in 2003 were above average, indicating good achievement.
- The best teaching encourages positive attitudes to learning.
- Assessment and marking are not always rigorous enough to show students how to improve.

### Commentary

162. Few students choose to study chemistry in the sixth form. In 2003, A2 results were below average and represented underachievement. This was a decline from previous years, when results fluctuated between being above and well above average. Provisional A2 results for 2004 indicate standards below the previous year's average, but close to matching expectations based on prior GCSE attainment. AS results in 2003 were above average, indicating good achievement. Provisional AS results in 2004 were higher than in the previous year and show good achievement.
163. Currently, standards in Year 13 are average. Students have a satisfactory understanding of basic facts and concepts. In Year 12, at this early stage, standards indicate above average attainment and good achievement on the AS course. In one practical lesson, in which students were introduced to the technique of titration, progress was good because the teacher had high expectations of what students should achieve. As a result, students were developing good skills in planning, setting up and conducting experiments. They showed good skills in measuring, collecting and using information, in the form of a conversion graph, to find the concentration of iron in a given solution. Students had a good understanding of the practical application of such techniques.
164. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Teachers use their very competent knowledge and skills in chemistry to provide clear demonstrations and explanations. They use practical work well to illustrate teaching points and to develop students' learning. Students engage well in the activities, concentrate and work productively. However, a few students are reluctant to ask questions when they are not clear about what they are doing. Questioning is not always rigorous enough to ensure that these students understand the work fully. Teachers do not use a wide enough range of teaching methods to involve students more actively in their learning. Analysis of students' work indicated shortcomings in marking and in teachers' checking of the adequacy and depth of note-taking.
165. New and satisfactory leadership has a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses within chemistry. The school follows the Salters course, a practical-based course. However, there are too few inputs from relevant industrial, pharmaceutical and scientific companies to add relevance and interest to students' learning. Checking and assessing students' and teachers' work are insufficiently rigorous to maximise students' achievement. The use of assessment, especially the setting and marking of work, is not effective enough in target setting. Improvement since the previous inspection is unsatisfactory because standards fell recently. Leadership and management have the capacity and commitment to raise standards and achievement in the subject to suitably high levels.



## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

The focus was on the AS course in information technology and the A2 computing course.

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- AS/A2 results were well below average recently and indicated unsatisfactory achievement.
- The improved monitoring of coursework helps to raise standards.
- Teachers use their good subject expertise to motivate students.
- Lower attaining students make slow progress in the theory aspects of the course.

### **Commentary**

166. A2 results in computing were below national and school averages in 2003 and students' achievement was unsatisfactory. In 2004, A2 results improved, all four students passed and achievement was satisfactory. AS results in 2003 were well below average and represented unsatisfactory achievement. Provisional AS results in 2004 were well below the previous year's national average and again represented unsatisfactory achievement.
167. Standards of work in Years 12 and 13 are currently higher than those evident in recent AS and A2 performances. They indicate that current students are on track to attain results matching the national average in AS and A2. They indicate satisfactory achievement at this early stage of the school year, despite some problems with the computer network. Students of different ethnic groups in Year 12 worked well together to learn how to dismantle a computer to identify its components. Year 13 students find database design and normalisation theory difficult to grasp. Lower attainers experience difficulties with many of the theoretical aspects of the computing course.
168. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall, enabling students to make the expected gains in skills, knowledge and understanding in lessons. Teachers' effective use of their good subject expertise and good relationships with students help them to explain theory briskly and to maximise the time for practical work. Students improve their work because teachers now insist on students meeting firmer homework and coursework deadlines than previously. It was not possible to see recent examples of Year 12 work, but examiners' reports suggested that teachers' assessments are accurate and meet syllabus requirements. Staff and students have coped flexibly with recent network problems and, with good support from the school's technician, continue to make adequate progress in lessons.
169. Leadership and management are now satisfactory and standards are showing signs of rising. Taking into account the recent developments, the increased and good provision of computing resources, improved staffing and the good attempts to correct the recent underachievement of the few students who have studied the subject at AS/A2 levels, improvement since the previous inspection is just satisfactory. The department has suitable plans to link students' coursework projects to business, commerce and industrial applications and to provide more effective short-term homework targets for students. The department has the capacity for further improvement.

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

170. Students have competent skills in ICT and make satisfactory, but inconsistent, use of these skills to support and extend their work across the curriculum. In several, though not all sixth form, subjects, students are making good progress in researching on the Internet and presenting coursework. They do not generally use a wide enough range of software applications. They use computers confidently and accurately produce good graphs, as seen in mathematics. They develop and practise research and presentational skills well in subjects

such as media studies, business studies and travel and tourism. Good increases in the provision of computing hardware and software mean that computers are now more readily available in lessons. Recent difficulties with the network have restricted opportunities for staff to plan more regular and frequent use of ICT to improve students' knowledge, understanding and skills in the various subjects.

## **HUMANITIES**

The focus of the inspection was on the GCE A2/AS courses in history and psychology. Work was sampled in geography. AS/A2 results recently were well above average. Standards of work seen in class are well above average. Achievement of students of all capabilities is very good. Teaching and learning observed were very good. Leadership and management of the course are of high quality. Work was sampled in religious education. Recent AS/A2 results were average and indicated satisfactory achievement. In the Year 13 lesson observed, teaching was very good and the well above average standards of work indicated very good achievement.

## **HISTORY**

Provision in history is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Standards have improved and are currently above average, indicating good achievement.
- Students discuss historical issues confidently.
- Good subject knowledge informs clear and challenging teaching.
- Limited use of ICT slows further development of skills for independent study.

### **Commentary**

171. A2 results in 2003 indicated standards were broadly average, although those for girls were slightly below. They were below expectations based on prior GCSE attainment. Provisional results for 2004 show good improvement, particularly at the higher grades A and B, which are well above the previous year's national average. AS results in 2003 were well below average and indicated unsatisfactory achievement. They improved considerably in 2004 to higher than the previous year's national average and represent good achievement overall.
172. Currently, standards are above average in Years 12 and 13 and indicate good achievement. Students of all capabilities in the groups are making good progress, because teachers use very good subject knowledge to challenge students to think carefully and deeply. Learning is good as a result of the strong emphasis, from the start of the course, on the development of crucial study skills such as essay writing. Students develop their work through good opportunities to discuss searching historical questions, to evaluate the views of different historians. They like undertaking personal research, respond enthusiastically and enjoy history. The limited use of ICT restricts the development of skills for independent study. Although the school has a good system for setting targets for students to improve, the history department does not yet make the most effective use of assessment to set suitably demanding targets and to show students how to improve.
173. New and good leadership and management support developments in teaching and learning. Key issues for development are identified and an appropriate and effective improvement plan is in progress. Improvement since the previous inspection is good as examination results have improved and there is greater emphasis on independent learning.

## PSYCHOLOGY

Provision in psychology is **good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Improved results since the previous inspection are a result of well-planned teaching.
- Good teaching and learning show students how well they are doing and how to improve.
- Achievement is good in Year 13 because students consolidate their work and respond positively to the challenging work set.
- Limited opportunity to work independently restricts the rate of learning in Year 12.

### Commentary

174. A2 results in 2003 matched the national average and indicated very good achievement for the large number of students. AS results were above average and indicated very good achievement. AS results were of the same high standard in 2004. Provisional A2 results for the large entry show a decline, but taking into account students' prior GCSE attainment, achievement was good overall. Female students usually attain higher than the male students, as they do nationally in this subject.

175. Standards in work seen in Years 12 and 13 were above average. Achievement for male and female students of all the different capabilities is as expected in Year 12 and good by Year 13. This is because teachers make sure that students consolidate previous knowledge thoroughly before challenging them to apply it at higher levels in well-planned lessons. In Year 12, students grasp competently the ethical implications of well-known psychological studies, in response to thorough teaching. In Year 13, students know how to define, explain and apply well the specialist terminology in topics such as mental health, because teachers probe and extend their understanding well.

176. Teaching and learning are good in Year 13, where teachers use good subject knowledge and a variety of methods to engage students' interest and to stimulate good learning. They mark written assignments with sensitivity, checking standards vigilantly, and give good, specific advice on how students should improve. In Year 12, students have insufficient opportunities to think independently, which is a hindrance to them making faster progress.

177. Good leadership of the subject enables teachers to work well together as a team. Good management enables staff to plan together and to share very good materials, methods and ideas. As a consequence, improved teaching has supported rising standards in Year 13. Improvement since the previous inspection is good and standards are higher.

## ENGINEERING, TECHNOLOGY AND MANUFACTURING

The focus was on the AS/A2 courses in product design. Work was sampled in the GNVQ hospitality and catering course. In the one lesson observed, standards were average and indicated satisfactory achievement at this stage of the course. The teaching and learning observed were good. Students learned correct techniques for food preparation from a well-qualified local chef.

## PRODUCT DESIGN

Provision in product design is **satisfactory**.

## **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The best teaching helps students to work independently and develop innovative design ideas.
- Feedback to students is of inconsistent quality.
- Course leadership has identified and implemented suitable strategies for improvement.

### **Commentary**

178. Recent AS and A2 results have been below average overall for the small number of candidates. They indicate achievement that is just satisfactory taking into account students' prior GCSE attainment.
179. Currently, students' work is on course to achieve broadly average attainment in AS and A2 examinations, and achievement is satisfactory. Students in Year 12 develop their own design ideas well. They know how to evaluate the effectiveness of their designs through analysis of existing products, good use of computers for research and because teachers provide them with good prompts for product analysis. They work enthusiastically to design and make their own radios. Year 13 students model and test their ideas well. They work independently to develop innovative designs. They are making useful progress now and are clear about what they need to do to improve coursework.
180. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. Students feel, justifiably, that they are now making appropriate progress because teachers check their work frequently and regularly, set realistic targets and insist on deadlines being met. Extra-curricular visits motivate students and help them to appreciate the relevance of their work, but these are infrequent. In Year 12, students make better and independent progress in those lessons in which the teacher provides them with appropriate resources for practical work and ICT facilities for research. Teachers provide too few opportunities for students to discuss and debate their work rigorously.
181. Satisfactory leadership and management have a clear understanding of previous shortcomings. Suitable strategies are now in place to address what needs to be done to improve teaching and learning, but these are yet to make their full impact. However, standards show signs of rising and are currently average. Written targets and feedback to students does not always match the good quality of the verbal feedback they receive. Students do not yet use ICT and computer-assisted design and computer-assisted manufacturing as much as they should. Effective deployment of technicians provides good support to courses and students. The department operates an open access policy to post-16 courses, but few students choose to study the subject. Improvement since the previous inspection is satisfactory.

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

The focus was on the advanced courses in art and design, media studies and performing arts. Work was sampled in **drama** in which the teaching and learning are of a high quality. In the two lessons observed in Year 12 and Year 13, standards were above average and indicate good achievement at this stage of the courses. In 2003, A2 results in drama and theatre studies were well above average and represent very good achievement.

### **ART AND DESIGN**

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Standards are currently average and achievement is good.
- Teachers' very good demonstrations establish high expectations of students' effort.

- Good one-to-one tuition sustains and challenges students over lengthy projects.
- Unsatisfactory accommodation restricts whole-class teaching.

### Commentary

182. A2 and AS results for 2003 were well below average and below expectations based on prior GCSE attainment. By comparison, A2 and AS results for 2004 were above the previous year's average and represented good achievement. The recent series of fluctuations in results was caused by staff changes and inconsistent provision over recent years, which have now been remedied. By Year 13, standards attained are average in the work seen. For the present Year 13 groups this represents good achievement based on their prior attainment. Painting skills are above average, especially when adopting the style of other artists. Students take great care over work in folders and sketchbooks and make interesting and elaborate presentations in their personal study books. Through visits to galleries and effective use of the Internet and library for research purposes, students have a good awareness of a wide range of artists and their works.
183. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Teachers show very good knowledge and understanding of their subject and use their skills successfully to demonstrate the properties and potential problems of techniques. In a Year 13 lesson, the teacher's enthusiasm for the project generated good discussions among students. The teacher's good use of expressive and technical vocabulary enabled students to share and embellish ideas. In very long practical sessions, teachers provide effective one-to-one support to sustain students' efforts. Teachers miss opportunities to develop students' vocabulary in discussions of their work. Studios are divided into two small rooms with insufficient space for teachers to work with whole groups in one area.
184. Good leadership and management reflect a very clear view of how students should build on previous experience. The positive changes introduced recently will take time to have full effect, as new courses are introduced to utilise fully the skills of the staff. Improvement since the previous inspection is satisfactory and the department has the capacity for further improvement.

## MEDIA STUDIES

Provision in media studies is **very good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good teaching leads to well above average standards and very good achievement.
- Very good advice to students on how to improve helps them to succeed.
- Very good management has improved teaching and the standards of female students.
- Occasionally, lessons do not extend gifted and talented students fully.

### Commentary

185. A2 results in 2003 were above average and represented very good achievement. Provisional A2 and AS results in 2004 were well above the previous year's national average and indicate very good achievement. Male students usually attain higher grades than female students.
186. Standards in work seen in Years 12 and 13 are well above the national average. In Year 12, students apply analytical concepts very well to questions and delve beneath the surface of everyday assumptions and media experiences. They understand technical terms such as *mise en scene*. They apply these terms very well to their studies of film and television sequences to demonstrate methodically how a director communicates a point of view to an audience. By

Year 13, students build very well on a firm foundation of understanding and know how to categorise and make systematic associations between different types of feature films.

187. The quality of teaching and learning is very good. Teachers deploy very good subject knowledge to question students and to promote discussion. They utilise a variety of well-designed materials in class to explain theoretical ideas. This results in students gaining a very high degree of confidence and fluency in their manipulation of technical terms. Students benefit from well-focused guidance on how well they are doing in their written assignments and what to do in order to improve. This underpins very good achievement, because students receive the right mixture of support and challenge. Occasionally, the work does not extend fully the gifted and talented students in Year 12 because tasks set in class are not contrasting enough to test them as fully as they should.
188. Very good leadership and management ensure good teamwork and sharing of good practice. Teachers analyse the strengths and weaknesses of particular groups of students to ensure that teaching extends their understanding fully. Teaching methods have improved as a result, and the standards of girls have risen in consequence.

## **PERFORMING ARTS**

Provision in performing arts is **very good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Very good teaching enables students to achieve very well and reach high standards.
- Students' interest and enthusiasm in practical work and theory promote very good learning.
- Very good leadership and management enable staff to work as a team to improve teaching
- The range of materials is sometimes too limited to ensure full understanding of ideas discussed.

### **Commentary**

189. Results in the VCE performing arts course in 2003 were well above average. They represented very good achievement compared with students' prior overall GCSE attainment. Provisional results in 2004 are similarly high.
190. Standards in work seen continue to be well above average in Years 12 and 13. Students understand very well the range of operations and types of performing arts organisations as well as their business and financial arrangements. They perform skilfully in practical acting and improvisation exercises, because teachers build well on their existing skills. Students reach very high standards as they benefit from a subtle mixture of coaching, encouragement and demands to think and contribute independently as they work.
191. The quality of teaching and learning is very good. Teachers exploit very good subject knowledge and a stimulating mixture of teaching methods to draw in students' curiosity and interest. Teachers check how well students are doing, frequently and regularly, and give them clear pointers on how to do better. However, the quality and availability of materials to stimulate student thinking are sometimes inadequate to maximise their understanding of ideas discussed in class. Achievement is very good because teachers exploit students' enthusiasm and creative commitment. They make challenging demands upon the students' ability to concentrate and learn from each other as they collaborate in practical acting projects.
192. Very good leadership and management of the subject ensure good teamwork and the mutual sharing of ideas and methods to improve teaching. Very good use of the thorough and careful assessment and recording of information about students' progress enhances teaching and learning, leading to further improvement on already very high standards.

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

The focus of the inspection was the VCE course in travel and tourism. Work was sampled on the leisure and tourism GNVQ course in Year 12. In the lesson observed, teaching and learning were good and standards were average. Achievement at this very early stage is good overall.

### **TRAVEL AND TOURISM**

Provision in travel and tourism is **good**.

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

- Students achieve well in relation to prior attainment as a result of good teaching.
- Students' good attitudes and ability to work well and independently promote good learning.
- Teachers' very good assessment and guidance support good achievement
- A hindrance to improvement is that no one has overall responsibility for leading the course.

#### **Commentary**

193. The first group of 14 students completed the VCE course in 2004 with overall results close to the previous year's national average. Most students achieved results above the predicted grades based on prior attainment at GCSE and achievement was good overall. Students who transferred following the successful completion of the GNVQ intermediate level course achieved very well.

194. Standards achieved by students on the current course vary but are broadly average. This indicates good achievement as standards at entry to Year 12 are below average for the course. This good progress is the result of very good support and academic guidance from teachers and students' high level of commitment to their coursework. Students work with increasing confidence, collect information from a variety of sources and form reasoned judgements. Theory is balanced with appropriate case-study applications. Critical analysis and synthesis are not sufficiently developed. Students use ICT skills competently to support their coursework assignments.

195. Teaching overall is good. Very good relationships between students and teacher form the basis for productive learning. Good emphasis in lessons on independent learning helps students to think for themselves and to develop initiative. The very thorough and helpful marking of students' work assignments leads to good redrafting that improves the quality of their presentations. This very good assessment has a very positive effect on the good achievement made over Years 12 and 13. Teaching does not make enough use of visual reinforcement and students do not always prepare themselves well for discussion in lessons.

196. Day-to-day management is good and the course runs efficiently. No one has overall responsibility for the coordination, monitoring and the development of the course. This limitation means that leadership of the course is satisfactory rather than better. Students benefit greatly from the good quality of fieldwork and related activities undertaken.

## **BUSINESS**

The focus of the inspection was provision on the single and double award VCE business courses.

## **BUSINESS STUDIES**

Provision in business studies is **very good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- VCE results are well above average and students achieve very well.
- Very good teaching and learning produce very good achievement over Years 12 and 13.
- Very good relationships between students and teachers result in very productive learning.
- Students' understanding benefits from the very good use made of local business links.
- Students do not always read widely around the topics studied.

### **Commentary**

197. Results on both the single and double award courses in 2003 were well above average and represented very good achievement. Results in 2004 were even higher than the previous year and again indicate very good achievement compared with students' prior GCSE attainment. The rate of retention on the courses is high.

198. Standards of work seen are currently above average and rising in Years 12 and 13. Students' achievement is very good in relationship to their prior levels of attainment. This is due mainly to very good teaching and students' very positive attitudes to their studies. Students' work develops very well with good knowledge and understanding of business theory being well exemplified through a range of independent case studies. Critical analysis is progressively and well developed over Years 12 and 13 but few students make use of reading around the subject. Key skills including the use of ICT are good.

199. Teaching is very good and very well planned. Teachers' very good subject knowledge underpins presentation and discussion and lends clarity to the explanations provided. Very good relationships between students and teacher result in productive learning. Students receive good opportunities to contribute to discussion and to develop ideas but there is scope for more group enquiry work. Assessment of students' work is good. Work assignments are very thoroughly marked and students find this particularly helpful in identifying areas for improvement.

200. Very good leadership and management of the subject provide a very good sense of direction, and curricular planning is good. A considerable strength is the very good range and variety of links with local business that integrate well into the teaching of the course units. Improvement since the previous inspection is very good, particularly in the provision for and achievement of students.

## **HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE**

The focus of the inspection was the VCE course in health and social care.

### **HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE**

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Students achieve well and reach average standards in the VCE course.
- Good teaching helps students to develop very good attitudes to their work.



- Teachers' good management helps students to make good use of local care settings.
- Students do not use computers enough to analyse data on health and fitness.

### **Commentary**

201. VCE results in 2003 were slightly above the national average. Students' achievement was good when related to their prior GCSE results. 2004 results were broadly similar and again indicate good achievement. The interim grades of current Year 13 students show that their progress from Year 12 is good. Five of the six GNVQ intermediate students entered in 2003 passed, indicating satisfactory achievement. In 2004, results improved and represent good achievement, with all seven students gaining the GNVQ award, and two obtaining merit grades.
202. Present students' work indicates that they are on target to attain standards matching the national average. Good teaching helps them make good progress. In lessons observed, Year 13 students worked well in pairs to consolidate theory and to plan visits to a nursery. They used ICT competently for word-processing assignments but not enough to model or analyse data on fitness and nutrition. The work of a few higher attaining students' work occasionally lacks sufficient depth of evaluation.
203. Teaching and learning are good because teachers' good subject expertise helps students, including those with special educational needs, to understand the relationship between theory and the diets of clients chosen for study. Students develop very good attitudes to their work because teachers encourage them to contribute to class discussion and to improve listening skills. In a very good Year 12 lesson students learned good communication skills from video clips in preparation for one-to-one and group interactions with clients. The regular and frequent assessment of written work provides good guidance to students about how they can improve their grades.
204. Good leadership and management result in well-planned courses in which students use local care settings well. Good plans are in place for further and more frequent visits to care establishments. The subject, not reported on previously, has good potential to improve further.

## **PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT AND GENERAL PROGRAMMES**

The focus of the inspection was the AS/A2 course in general studies.

### **GENERAL STUDIES**

Provision in general studies is **very good**.

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

- An unusually large proportion of students gain AS/A2 qualifications in the subject.
- Very good planning ensures students benefit from a well-balanced and wide-ranging course.
- Good teaching exposes students to challenging and topical issues.

### **Commentary**

205. A2 results in 2003 were slightly above average and indicated good achievement. Provisional A2 results for 2004 broadly match the previous year's national average and represent close to very good achievement for the 48 candidates. AS results in 2003 were well below average. They improved considerably in 2004, when 133 students, covering a very wide range of prior attainment, took the AS examination. Their overall results were slightly above the previous year's national average and show good achievement.

206. Standards are above average in work seen in Years 12 and 13 and achievement is very good overall. Students discuss complex issues intelligently and with good insight. They develop good skills in independent learning and research their work thoroughly. Most students make good use of their experiences of work-related learning to enrich and extend their topic work. Many make effective use of ICT to support their learning and to present their work well. Students use their generally above average skills in literacy and numeracy to complement their study skills and to assist their progress in class and in homework.
207. Good teaching, aided by a good range of up-to-date source materials, encourages students to think deeply about issues relevant to their futures. Students appreciate the school's commitment to the subject and the good guidance and support from teachers, as reflected in one student's comment on the staff's "eagerness to hear our opinions".
208. The subject's success owes much to its very good leadership and management, which provide a clear rationale for the subject among staff and students. The course is well planned, including complex staffing arrangements. An excellent course booklet has been produced that is instrumental in students' overall very good achievement. Improvement since the previous inspection is very good as a result of good planning, increasing number of students taking the subject and the much improved standing and status of the general studies programme in the sixth form.

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