

INSPECTION REPORT

RAINFORD HIGH TECHNOLOGY COLLEGE

St Helens

LEA area: St Helens

Unique reference number: 104826

Principal: Mr M Morris

Lead inspector: Mr D Klemm

Dates of inspection: 11th to 15th October 2004

Inspection number: 268888

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Community
Age range of students:	11 – 18
Gender of students:	Mixed
Number on roll:	1742
School address:	Higher Lane Rainford St. Helens Merseyside
Postcode:	WA11 8NY
Telephone number:	01744 885914
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Councillor T Brown
Date of previous inspection:	1 st February 1999

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Rainford High Technology College is a very large, mixed, 11-18 school with an above average sized sixth form. It is located in the village of Rainford in the borough of St. Helens. There are 1742 students on roll, with a balance of boys and girls. In the sixth form, there are 250 students. Although it draws from a large number of feeder schools, most students come from six main feeder schools in the residential districts of Rainford, Eccleston and Billinge. A large number of students have to travel by bus to school.

Many students are from socially advantaged backgrounds and the proportion of students eligible for free school meals is below the national average. The percentage of students with a statement of special educational need is broadly in line with the national average, although the percentage identified as having special educational needs is below average. There are very few students from minority ethnic backgrounds and fewer than two per cent whose mother tongue is other than English. Of these, none is at an early stage of learning English. The number of students who join or leave the school at other than usual times is very low. On entry to the school in Year 7, students' attainment is above average.

A new principal took up post in September 2002.

The school secured Beacon status in 2000.

The school was awarded specialist Technology College status in 2000.

The school won the School Achievement Award in 2002.
The school won a Sportsmark in 2002.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
2049	Mr D Klemm	Lead inspector	
9649	Mrs J Smith	Lay inspector	
30576	Mr P Bannon	Team inspector	Mathematics (sixth form)
21954	Mr T Chipp	Team inspector	Art and design Work-related learning
31879	Mr R Cohen	Team inspector	History (sixth form)
32686	Ms N Elliot	Team inspector	Special educational needs
23480	Mrs M Harding	Team inspector	Citizenship Religious education
11969	Mr J Hardy	Team inspector	Design and technology
11044	Mrs J Hedge	Team inspector	English English as an additional language
5985	Dr M Holland	Team inspector	Science
2893	Mr J Manning	Team inspector	Drama
32341	Mrs Y Maxson	Team inspector	Physical education
3654	Mr M McLachlan	Team inspector	Mathematics
1994	Mrs H Olds	Team inspector	History Geography
3793	Mr J Ratcliffe	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages
11676	Mr G Thomas	Team inspector	Music
31096	Mr J Thornhill	Team inspector	Information and communication technology

The inspection contractor was

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

Rainford High Technology College is a **good** school and has some very good features. During the inspection week students in Year 11 were out of school on work experience so judgements made on standards in Years 10 and 11 are based on lessons seen in Year 10 and on work collected by staff from students in Year 11. Students achieve well in Years 7 to 9 and their achievement is very good in Years 10 and 11. Teaching is good and the leadership of the school is very good. There is the commitment and capacity to improve further. Governors, the principal and senior managers are determined to continue to improve the quality of learning for all students. The school provides good value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The principal has clear and realistic plans for how the school can improve and provides very good leadership. He is very well supported by his governing body and senior staff.
- Students' achievements in Years 10 and 11 are very good.
- The vast majority of students across the school have very positive attitudes and are willing to work hard.
- The quality of mathematics teaching and learning across the school is excellent.
- The quality of provision in the sixth form is very good.
- The range of extra-curricular activities is very good.
- There are too few opportunities for students to take on responsibilities in school.
- Accommodation is poor and has a negative impact on learning in some subjects and on the social development of students.
- Provision for citizenship education is unsatisfactory.
- Parents are not involved enough in the life of the school.

How the school has changed since the previous inspection

The school has made **good** progress since the last inspection. Standards in tests and examinations have been maintained and teaching has improved. Provision for modern foreign languages has improved and is now good. The school gained Technology College status in 2000 and this has helped the school to focus on continuing to improve teaching and learning. Leadership is very good and there is evidence that the school has the capacity to improve further. As at the last inspection the accommodation is unsatisfactory and poor and has a negative impact on the quality of education the school provides.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Performance compared with:		all schools			similar schools
		2001	2002	2003	2003
Year 11	GCSE/GNVQ examinations	A	A	A	C
Year 13	A/AS level and VCE examinations	B	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 students attained similarly at the end of Year 9.

Students' achievement overall is good. In Years 7 to 9 students' achievement is good. Standards in the Year 9 national tests in 2003 were well above average in mathematics and

science and above average in English. In 2004, the results were better in all three subjects. Although girls do better than boys, this is less so than in the majority of schools nationally. Standards of work in other subjects are above average although they well above average in design technology and average in music. Standards in Years 10 and 11 are well above average and achievement is very good. The GCSE results have been well above average for the last few years and these results have been maintained in 2004. Students are doing at least as well as in other similar schools. Achievement in mathematics is especially strong. Across the school students from different minority ethnic groups achieve as well as other students. Students with special educational needs are now making good progress and achieve well in most subjects although the provision of more individual support would improve further their achievements. The school makes a good contribution to students' development including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Overall students' attitudes, behaviour and attendance are very good although the school does not give them enough opportunities to exercise responsibility.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education provided by the school is **good**. Teaching is **good** because staff have good subject knowledge and insist upon high standards of behaviour in lessons. In most lessons teachers expect all students to work hard and the pace of learning is brisk. The curriculum is good and there is a very good range of extra-curricular activities. There are some opportunities for vocational education but these could be extended to meet the needs of all students. The school provides good support and guidance and students feel well cared for and secure. There are good links with the community and other schools and educational institutions. Links with parents are satisfactory although not enough is done to involve them in the life of the school.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are **very good**. The school has improved well since the last inspection. Governors are very clear about what needs to be done to improve further, and provide sympathetic yet critical support for the principal. They are closely involved in planning future developments and evaluating the school's performance. The principal provides very good leadership and is a strong presence around the school. Senior staff have a broad range of experience and expertise and provide very good management for the school. Middle managers work effectively at implementing whole school issues and most departments are managed well except for citizenship where management is unsatisfactory.

PARENTS' AND STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents are very positive about the quality of education and care in the school and how its reputation in the local community has improved over the last few years. The school is popular and over-subscribed. Attendance at consultation evenings is very good but the school does not do enough to consult parents about future developments or to involve them in the day-to-day life of the school. Although some parents would like more written reports on the progress of their children the quality of the annual report is good. Students have very positive attitudes to school but feel they are not given sufficient responsibilities and their views are not taken into account when decisions are made.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- provide students with more responsibilities and involve them more effectively in decisions about how the school is organised and run;

- provide social areas for students and refurbish and upgrade toilets, dining-room facilities and some teaching rooms;
- review the management, planning, teaching and reporting of citizenship to ensure that all students receive their full entitlement and statutory requirements are met;
- consult parents more effectively about what the school needs to do to improve and how they can contribute to the life of the school.

In order to meet statutory requirements:

- provide a daily act of collective worship for all students;
- ensure there are opportunities for all students to study religious education in the sixth form;
- teach information and communication technology (ICT) to all students in Years 9, 10 and 11.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIXTH FORM

OVERALL EVALUATION

The **overall effectiveness of the sixth form is very good** and is a strength of the school. Numbers are large and the college is cost effective. Examination results are above the national average and students' achievement is good. In recent years most students have reached their predicted grades and many have exceeded them. Teaching is very good and students develop very good learning practices both in lessons and when working independently in the excellent private study facilities available to them. Leadership of the sixth form is very good and students comment favourably about the support they receive from subject teachers and their pastoral tutors. The sixth form is very well managed and staff monitor very carefully the progress being made by students. There has been good improvement since the last inspection.

The main strengths and weaknesses of the sixth form are:

- The support and guidance for students are excellent and their work and personal development are carefully yet sympathetically managed.
- Students achieve well and very few leave the college before the end of their courses.
- Standards are above the national average and many students achieve above their predicted grades.
- Teaching is very good overall.
- Facilities for learning are very good and students develop very good study techniques.
- Opportunities for vocational studies are limited although there is a comprehensive range of academic subjects.

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. Ten subjects in the sixth form were inspected and the rest sampled. Not all subjects in the sixth form were inspected.

Curriculum area	Evaluation
English, languages and communication	<p>Good in English literature. Standards have improved year on year and results are above average. Boys did especially well in 2003. Teaching overall is good and, in the best lessons, is stimulating and well planned. Leadership and management are good and improvement since the last inspection has been very good.</p> <p>Good in french. Only three students are studying french in the sixth form and their achievement is good. In recent years, the small numbers of students taking a-level french have achieved their predicted grades. Teaching and learning are good, as are leadership and management. Progress since the last inspection has been satisfactory.</p>
Mathematics	<p>Very good in mathematics. Results are well above the national average and students achieve very well. The most able students almost always attain the highest grades. Teaching is very good and often excellent. Students respond</p>

	well to the brisk pace of learning in lessons. Leadership and management are very good. Progress since the last inspection has been good.
Science	Good in chemistry. Results are above the national average and students achieve well. Teaching is good and lessons help students to develop their thinking skills. Leadership and management are satisfactory and progress since the last inspection has been satisfactory.
Information and communication technology (ICT)	Very good in ICT. Results are well above average and all students are achieving better than predicted. Their achievement is excellent. Very good teaching encourages students to develop very impressive study skills. Improvement since the last inspection has been very good as a result of caring and very effective leadership and management.
Humanities	Satisfactory in history. At the time of the inspection key staff were absent on long-term illness and although the teaching seen was good and standards were above average achievement was only average. Standards in examinations in recent years have been just below average. Leadership is good and management very good. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory.
Engineering, technology, and manufacturing	Very good in design technology - textiles. Standards of work in Year 13 are very high and are well above average across the sixth form. Teaching is very good and students learn very well from their teachers who have good subject knowledge. Leadership and management are very good and progress since the last inspection has been good.
Visual and performing arts and media	Good in art and design. In recent years standards have been below average but results improved in 2004. Standards in lessons are above average and students are achieving satisfactorily. Teaching is good with particular strengths in the feedback teachers give to students about their progress. Leadership and management are good overall and satisfactory progress has been made since the last inspection. Good in drama. Standards are above average and improving. Teaching is very good and students, especially the higher attainers, are doing well in examinations. Leadership and management are very good. Progress since the last inspection has been good.
Hospitality, sports, leisure and travel	Very good in physical education. Standards in lessons are well above average and the examination results have been well above average in recent years. Most students achieve their predicted grades and some exceed them. Teaching is very good and provides an effective stimulus for learning. Leadership and management are very good.

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

ADVICE, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

Excellent care and support are provided for all sixth form students. Students' personal and academic progress is carefully monitored by efficient and approachable tutors. There is a comprehensive induction programme to the sixth form and very good advice is provided about the options available to them when they leave the college. Students benefit from the regular reviews they receive on their academic progress.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE SIXTH FORM

The leadership and management of the sixth form are very good. Students comment on the warm and friendly atmosphere, which enables them to settle in very quickly and achieve well. The vice-principal has established a clear sense of direction for the college and tutors work well with students on a daily basis. The management team along with tutors have generated a strong sense of community. There is a purposeful working ethos in the sixth form which is

carefully monitored by sixth form staff. Students appreciate the good quality of accommodation and resources available to them.

The school has undertaken a detailed analysis of the expenditure and income of the sixth form and this indicates that the sixth form is cost effective. There are some large teaching groups in subjects such as psychology which help to fund subjects where there are smaller numbers such as French.

STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Students are very positive about sixth form life. They speak highly of the quality of relationships with staff and the support they receive from teachers. The very good levels of attendance and the good retention rate indicate high levels of satisfaction with the quality of teaching they are receiving. There is general satisfaction with the quality and amount of resources available to them including the easy access to ICT facilities and the sixth form library.

Some students would appreciate more opportunities to be involved in the general life of the school. This would help to enrich their personal development.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY STUDENTS

Standards achieved in subjects and courses

In Year 9 standards of work are above average and students' achievement is good. Students in Year 10 are attaining well above average standards and their achievement is very good and, although Year 11 students were not in school, the evidence available suggests a similar pattern of attainment and achievement in Year 11. In the 2003 GCSE examinations, the results were well above average. Standards in the sixth form are above average and students' achievement is good. In the 2003 examinations results were above average.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Achievement is good overall and very good in Years 10 and 11.
- Results in GCSE mathematics are well above the national average.
- Boys achieve well.
- Higher attaining students do very well in most subjects.
- Results in the sixth form are consistently above the national average.
- Results in GCSE dual award examinations in science are not high enough.

Commentary

1. On entry to the school, students' standards of attainment are above average in English, mathematics and science. In other subjects standards are average.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	34.9 (35.0)	33.4 (33.3)
Mathematics	39.5 (38.9)	35.4 (34.7)
Science	36.3 (35.5)	33.6 (33.3)

There were 288 students in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

2. Achievement overall is good. Students have achieved standards in the national tests over the last few years that are well above average in science and mathematics and above average in English. Although the results have not improved to the same extent as schools nationally, students have achieved very well in comparison with similar schools. In 2004 these results have been maintained with an improvement in the English results. Teachers' assessments of standards in other subjects indicate above average attainment in most subjects and the inspection evidence confirms these assessments.
3. There is no significant difference in the attainment of boys and girls in mathematics and science although girls do a little better in English. High attaining students are achieving very well across most subjects. The achievement of students with special educational needs is good in most subjects.

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

	School results	National results
Percentage of students gaining 5 or more A*-C grades	68 (65)	52 (50)
Percentage of students gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	96 (97)	91 (91)
Percentage of students gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	99 (99)	96 (96)
Average point score per student (best eight subjects)	41.2 (39.6)	34.7 (34.8)

There were 289 students in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

4. During the inspection students in Year 11 were on work experience and judgements on standards and achievement are based on lessons and work seen in Year 10, examples of students' work in Year 11 and past examination results.
5. The GCSE examination results have been well above the national average in recent years although in 2004 they were slightly down on those in 2003. Over the last few years results have improved in line with results nationally. The school sets ambitious yet realistic targets for GCSE performance and in the main gets close to achieving them. Standards in lessons are above average in nearly all subjects and well above average in English, design and technology, art and design, physical education, ICT, geography and drama. Standards are high in mathematics. Achievement in Years 10 and 11 is very good. Results in dual award science are average and achievement is satisfactory; standards could be improved.
6. Girls achieve better than boys but the difference is far less than in most schools nationally. Higher attaining students achieve very well in all the subjects they study. Students with special educational needs achieve well in most subjects, especially in physical education and religious education. Their attainment in English is now satisfactory although results in 2003 in the Year 9 English national tests and in their GCSE examinations indicated some of these students were underachieving. The provision of specialist teachers and additional time is now beginning to have a good impact on their achievement. The small number of students from minority ethnic backgrounds are achieving as well as other students. In all years and in most subjects, students develop their literacy skills well. Although students' numeracy and ICT skills are very good not enough is being done to extend their use in other subjects.

Sixth form

7. Standards in the AS, A-level and AVCE examinations have been above the national averages in recent years and students have achieved well. In 2004, although results were not quite as strong as in 2003, all students achieved pass grades in their examinations.

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

	School results	National results
Percentage of entries gaining A-E grades	91.7 (96.7)	89.4 (92.6)
Percentage of entries gaining A-B grades	38.7 (35.7)	32.6 (35.3)

Average point score per pupil	288.3 (261.2)	258.2 (263.3)
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There were 131 students in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

Commentary

8. Attainment on entry to the sixth form is average overall although there are significant numbers of students with high levels of attainment at GCSE. For the last few years, nearly all students have passed their examinations and achieved their predicted grades and in 2004 all students achieved pass grades. In 2003, boys did better than girls and reached standards which were well above the national averages. The percentage of students reaching the highest grades of A and B was above the national average in 2003. Students with special educational needs achieve well.
9. In all the subjects inspected in depth standards were above average and were well above average in English literature, mathematics, ICT, textiles and physical education. Students' achievements are good and they are prepared well for entry into higher education where it is important for them to be able to work independently. Sixth form students are developing very good and advanced ICT skills. Their willingness to work hard at home and in college is a key factor in their success. Most students read widely across the curriculum and write their essays and reports accurately.

Students' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Students have very positive attitudes to learning and they behave well. Students' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is good. Attendance is very good and punctuality is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The vast majority of students are well motivated and have very positive attitudes to their work.
- Attendance is very good.
- Provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good.
- The school provides too few opportunities for students to take responsibility.
- A small minority of students are sometimes disruptive in lessons.
- There is a very high level of fixed-term exclusions.

Commentary

10. Students are happy at school and this is reflected in the attendance rate which is well above the national average. Students want to do well and display very positive attitudes to their work. They respond particularly well when teaching is challenging and expectations are high.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year 2002/03

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	6.1	School data	0.2
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.

11. The vast majority of students behave very well, both in lessons and around the school. Considering the poor condition and decoration of the buildings and the constricted nature of the site, students behave in a tolerant and patient manner, displaying a good level of respect to each other and to adults. The strong presence of senior members of staff around the school helps to make break times orderly and safe.
12. A small minority of students are responsible for the very high level of fixed-term exclusions. The school sets high expectations for behaviour and is determined to challenge the inappropriate behaviour of a small minority of students. Fixed-term exclusions are given appropriately for serious offences such as aggressive behaviour and verbal abuse. However, the school recognises that the high level of repeat exclusions indicates that, in many cases, this is not an effective sanction. The forthcoming introduction of an on-site inclusion unit will broaden the range of sanctions available to the school and will enable the school to reduce the number of fixed-term exclusions given. The school has a good range of support strategies for those at risk of exclusion including flexible work-related programmes in Years 10 and 11 and good arrangements for student counselling. The very low level of permanent exclusions is a tribute to the school's inclusive ethos.

Exclusions

Ethnic background of students

Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of students on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	1022	189	1
White – any other White background	7	1	
Mixed – White and Asian	1		
Mixed – any other mixed background	8		
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	1		
Chinese	12		
No ethnic group recorded	691		

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

13. Provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good across the school. It is particularly strong in music, drama and religious education. Although there is no daily act of collective worship, which is a statutory breach, spirituality is well provided for in subjects across the curriculum. The ethos within the school is one that inspires achievement. There are good opportunities for creative and aesthetic experiences in many subjects and extra-curricular activities. The school teaches right and wrong through its clear behaviour codes and a fair balance of sanctions and rewards. Ethical aspects of topics are explored in a number of subjects, and students respond generously to opportunities to help charities.
14. The provision for students' social development is satisfactory, despite the poor dining accommodation and toilets, and lack of social areas. There are some strong features such as the Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme, the school council, and the many sporting

activities, but students in all years do not have enough opportunities to exercise responsibility. When students are given opportunities to use their initiative and exercise responsibility they respond very well. For example, about two-thirds of students in Year 11 showed enterprise by finding their own work experience placements. The popular Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme and the Junior Sports Leadership Award are other examples of students taking on responsibility. However, apart from the school council, there are few other opportunities for students to help with the running of the school and this is an area of the school's work that is under-developed. A number of Year 11 students spoke about how they feel that the school does not trust them. By providing more opportunities to take on responsibility the school may be able to build up a greater sense of student ownership in the school than at present exists.

15. Cultural opportunities are good overall, and very strong in the arts and modern foreign languages. Work on preparing students for life in a multi-cultural society is satisfactory.

Sixth form

16. Students speak very positively about their life in the sixth form. They find the work challenging and highly appreciate the helpfulness and support which their teachers provide. Relationships are based on mutual trust and respect. The high level of attendance, which is over 96 per cent, as well as the good retention rate, is an indication of students' satisfaction and of their commitment to learning. Despite their excellent attendance, a few students interrupt the smooth start of lessons by arriving late.
17. Many students help in the main school with reading, sports and school performances and there are good opportunities for them to take part in extra-curricular activities especially in music and drama. However, the school does not routinely involve sixth formers in the life of the main school. The provision of more opportunities to take on responsibility would help to enrich their personal development.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The overall quality of education provided by the school is good. Teaching is good because it is well planned and the school is making good use of national strategies to improve teaching and learning. The curriculum is good and there is a very good programme of extra-curricular activities. Students are well cared for and feel secure at school. Links with parents are satisfactory. There are good links with other schools and with the community.

Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are **good**. The assessment of students' work is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students behave well, work hard and concentrate well.
- Teachers have very good subject knowledge and the pace of learning is brisk.
- Relationships between teachers and students are good and help to promote effective learning.
- Teaching in citizenship is unsatisfactory because lesson planning is inadequate.
- Work in lessons is often challenging and students respond well.

- Students in the main school do not receive enough specific advice on what they need to do to improve.

Commentary

18. Teaching is good overall and is very good in mathematics, ICT, geography, music, physical education and drama. There is no significant difference in the quality of teaching across the year groups. Teaching is good because teachers have very good subject knowledge and they have high expectations of their students. In the small number of lessons where the teaching was unsatisfactory or, in one instance, poor, either the pace of learning was too slow or, as in citizenship lessons, the teachers did not feel confident with the teaching materials they were using and the lessons were not well planned. Students have confidence in their teachers and comment positively about the support they receive from them.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 200 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
13 (6.5%)	62 (31%)	88 (44%)	31 (15.5%)	5 (2.5%)	1 (0.5%)	0

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

19. Students work hard and concentrate well in most lessons. Relationships between staff and students are good and this helps to create a purposeful working environment. In the best lessons students are set challenging activities which require them to think about new ideas and clarify their learning through group or individual work. Most students work hard to complete their homework as well as they possibly can. In many lessons students were keen to share ideas about what they were learning.
20. The teaching and learning of students with special educational needs are good. When the teaching is good or better, teachers plan carefully, work closely with teaching assistants and have high expectations of students. Students express their ideas confidently, as in religious education and English, and are well motivated to persist with longer-term projects, such as those in art and design and design and technology. Planning is a particular strength in physical education where positive images of disability are displayed, and good individual student plans result in high levels of motivation, participation and achievement. Higher attaining students are taught very well in most subject areas.
21. Procedures for assessing students' progress and attainment have improved and are now good. Students know what they are capable of achieving and this information is shared with parents through reports and grades on students' work. Teachers are aware of how well their students are attaining in all subject areas. The school has set challenging, yet realistic, targets for all students but the use of this information to develop learning is mixed across the school. In design and technology, students understand well what they need to improve, but in science this is less well developed. The quality of marking is good. Most teachers make constructive comments in students' books although specific advice about what students need to do to improve is not always provided. The assessment of students with special educational needs is satisfactory although information about their attainment is not used enough to plan their support programmes or to assess their progress. Since the last inspection teaching has improved and there are now more good or better lessons.

Sixth form

22. Overall teaching in the sixth form is very good. It is especially strong in design and technology, mathematics, physical education, ICT and drama. Some teaching in mathematics is excellent because it is well planned and taught at a very brisk pace and students learn well because they are challenged intellectually. Across the sixth form there are very good working relationships between teachers and students. Students learn well because they are being taught very good study skills by their teachers. There is a very good working ethos in the sixth form study areas. Students appreciate the confident and up-to-date subject knowledge of their teachers.
23. The quality of the assessment and marking of students' work is very good. The marking of written work is thorough and students know precisely what they need to do to improve. In lessons the regular verbal assessments of students' work, as in art and design and physical education, are especially powerful in giving them immediate feedback on their progress. Students are very clear about what they are capable of attaining. The school monitors each student's academic progress regularly and carefully.

The curriculum

The school provides a good curriculum which includes a very good range of opportunities for enrichment activities. Resources are satisfactory but accommodation is poor.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Accommodation is poor and has a negative impact on students' learning and social development.
- The range and quality of courses is good and is especially strong in Years 7 to 9.
- There are very good extra-curricular activities for all students.
- Citizenship education is inadequate.
- Gifted and talented students receive very good support.
- Technology College status has enhanced provision very well in design and technology.
- There are limited opportunities for students to follow vocational courses, especially in the sixth form.

Commentary

24. In Years 7 to 9 the curriculum is very good with good provision for drama and opportunities for students to study one of the three languages that the school provides. The curriculum is inclusive and students with special educational needs are given the opportunity to study a language with some of this time being used to provide extra literacy support. In Years 10 and 11 the school offers a wide range of academic courses and there are some opportunities for students to take vocational courses at a local college. Fifty students in Years 10 and 11 are attending a local college for one afternoon a week for taster courses in vocational subjects. This is an area for further development to provide more opportunities for those students who wish to choose vocational courses.
25. The school meets statutory requirements with regard to the National Curriculum and in the provision of religious education, with the exception of a planned programme for all students for ICT in Year 9. In Years 10 and 11 the school needs to ensure all students

receive their entitlement to ICT. The school does not meet requirements with regard to a daily act of collective worship.

26. Provision for students with special educational needs across the school is satisfactory. Students with literacy needs have good specialist provision in Years 7 to 9. The curriculum for these students in Years 10 and 11 is developing but does not provide enough vocational opportunities to prepare them well for the world of work or further studies in a college of further education.
27. There is good support for learning outside the school day, including homework clubs and opportunities for students to discuss their work with teachers. Gifted and talented students are identified and provision of extension work for them in lessons is very good. They benefit from the wide range of enrichment activities as do all students in the school. The amount and quality of this extra-curricular work are very good and are especially strong in sport and the Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme.
28. The personal, social and health education programme makes a good contribution to students' personal development although provision for citizenship is unsatisfactory because it has not been planned well or given enough time to be taught effectively. Form tutor time is used well to provide both personal and academic support to students. The two assemblies provided each week for every year group are good and explore moral and social issues well and establish a common sense of purpose. Provision for careers education and work-related learning is good overall although provision in Years 7 and 8 needs to be developed further.
29. The school is working hard to develop effective teaching and learning strategies across the school. Teachers are using well the ideas of the National Strategy to plan their lessons and teach them to their students. The curriculum is reviewed systematically by senior staff and governors are involved well in monitoring progress and providing support and guidance. Technology College status has effectively enhanced the quality of provision in design and technology.
30. The school has a very good team of specialist teachers to cover all areas of the curriculum. At the time of the inspection the absence through illness of key staff in history was having an impact on the progress students were making in the sixth form. Teachers and ancillary staff are well qualified and are used effectively. Teaching assistants are experienced and hard working but there are too few of them to provide enough support for students with learning difficulties and they need more specialist training to improve their ICT skills.
31. Resources for learning are satisfactory overall, with good provision in a number of subjects. There are weaknesses in art and design, citizenship and religious education in Years 7 to 9 and resources for special educational needs, including ICT, are unsatisfactory. Accommodation is poor. Toilets, dining rooms and social areas for students are all inadequate. There are few areas where students can meet and socialise. The library provides high quality resources and is well managed but is too small to meet the needs of students who have to queue at lunch times to do private study work. The accommodation in English, science and design and technology and the outdoor facilities for physical education are unsatisfactory and, in these subjects, have a negative impact on learning. Music accommodation is poor and restricts the range of learning activities teachers can plan for students. Access to specialist rooms for students with disabilities is inadequate.

Sixth form

32. The school provides a very good range of AS and A-level courses in Years 12 and 13 with a small number of AVCE courses. Although this provision is good, students who wish to pursue vocational courses have to go to other institutions to continue their education. In some subjects such as English, mathematics and psychology numbers are high but in others, such as modern foreign languages, numbers are very low and opportunities for students to work co-operatively and to share ideas are very limited. The school is well aware of this and is in discussions with the local education authority to review post-16 education across the area.
33. The curriculum is enriched in the sixth form with some opportunities for students to be involved in the main life of school such as helping students with reading difficulties, although this is an area which is insufficiently developed. There are a number of extra-curricular activities of good quality on offer, including sport and performing arts. The tutorial programme provides good advice about higher education and also contributes well to students' personal development, although the school does not offer religious education for all students. The sixth form centre provides very good facilities for students. There is a good common room and excellent computer facilities. The sixth form library is good and is well managed.

Care, guidance and support

The school provides good support, advice and guidance for students. Procedures to ensure their care, welfare and safety are also good. The steps taken to involve students in the work and life of the school are satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school's good pastoral provision is based on very caring relationships between staff and students.
- Leadership is good and provides a very clear sense of direction for the pastoral system.
- There are some weaknesses in the provision for students' health and welfare.
- There are very good procedures to ensure the smooth transition of students to secondary school and between key stages.
- The monitoring of students' academic development is satisfactory but needs to be developed further.
- The school council does not yet have a significant impact on the life of the school.

Commentary

34. As at the last inspection, the school continues to provide good pastoral care for students, and parents speak very positively about this. Students who have worries feel confident to approach pastoral and other staff and they also value the friendly ear which the full-time medical assistant provides. The inclusion manager and two learning mentors provide good support for students who face a range of problems from behaviour difficulties to difficulties of organising their work.
35. The transition from a house-based to a year-based pastoral system has been successfully achieved. The school is aware that some problems of consistency and communication remain but the good system of regular pastoral meetings is helping to overcome these.

Students' behaviour is monitored closely. The computerised behaviour audit system provides a very effective means of monitoring behaviour, homework and organisation as well as the provision of rewards. There is very good liaison between pastoral staff and parents when students give cause for concern.

36. Monitoring of academic progress is satisfactory but is in the early stages of development. Teachers give students targets on how they can improve their work. However, whole-school assessment information is not yet being used effectively by pastoral staff to monitor students' academic progress. The acting vice-principal with pastoral responsibility had only been in post for five weeks at the time of the inspection but she has a very clear vision of how the pastoral system needs to develop. She was responsible for the development of the excellent student tracking system which exists in the sixth form and plans to introduce something comparable in the main school. The computerised behaviour audit system provides a very effective means of monitoring behaviour, homework and organisation as well as the provision of rewards. There is very good liaison between pastoral staff and parents when students give cause for concern.
37. There are very good procedures for ensuring that students make a smooth transition to secondary school and Year 7 students agree that the school has helped them to settle in well. There are also careful procedures to assist Year 9 students in choosing their options for the next key stage. Parents are fully involved at both transition stages. There is good provision for careers guidance from Year 9 onwards but the school is not at present providing careers education in Years 7 and 8.
38. The school has good arrangements for child protection. There are comprehensive arrangements for first aid and medical procedures which are overseen very efficiently by the full-time medical assistant. The school adheres carefully to its good Internet access policy. Risk assessments for school procedures and for the safety of the site are regularly undertaken. Fire officers have conducted a fire risk assessment for the planned stair-lifts for disabled students. However, there has been no recent fire safety audit of the premises and this should be done as soon as possible.
39. There are some concerns relating to students' health and welfare. The quality and selection of food provided through school meals are limited and do not promote healthy eating. The lack of proper dining facilities means that students have to rush their meals. Arrangements for wet weather break times are unsatisfactory, partly because there are inadequate easily supervised social spaces. The school has acted to put a stop to smoking in the toilets, but the inadequacy of the toilet provision, including the absence of soap, discourages use and is a health concern.
40. There is a well-structured and organised school council. The school listens to it and some improvements have been introduced as a result of the council's suggestions. However, there is considerable scope for the school to consult pupils more and to involve them more closely in its work and development. At the present time, the school council is seen as ineffective by many students because it has had limited impact in tackling students' concerns relating to such matters as the inadequate toilet provision, the quality of school food and the lack of social spaces and outdoor seating.

Sixth form

41. Provision for students' care, guidance and support is excellent. There is an excellent system for tracking students' personal and academic progress in the sixth form. Students value this system because they recognise that it is designed to support them and because it is underpinned by the very good relationships they have with sixth form staff. Pastoral staff use every week a computerised audit system to monitor non-attendance at lessons, incomplete homework and other causes of concern. The regular monitoring of students' marks against predicted grades enables staff to identify underachievement speedily. Students have regular reviews with their learning supervisors about their academic progress and tutorial time is well used to give students advice on how to make the best of their time in the sixth form. Extra mentoring support is available for students with low GCSE examination grades or those who request it for other reasons.

42. A comprehensive induction process prepares students very well for their time in the sixth form. Students are also well prepared for the next stage in their careers when they leave school. A Connexions officer is available on a weekly basis to provide students with independent advice and there is a very good programme which helps to guide students through the process of applying for higher education.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school has established a satisfactory partnership with parents, and good links with the community and with other schools and colleges.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Parents support their children's education well.
- The school does not do enough to consult and involve parents.
- There are some weaknesses in communication with parents.
- Curriculum liaison with primary schools is developing well.

Commentary

43. The school is popular and over-subscribed. Parents are very supportive of their children's education and levels of attendance at parents' evenings are high. Parents appreciate the opportunities they are given to attend meetings when their children move between key stages. They also appreciate the prompt contact which pastoral staff make when there are concerns. Some parents expressed the view that the school is less ready to contact them when there is good news. However, the introduction of a system of postcards to inform parents of good work done by students in Years 10 and 11 will help to rectify this.
44. Only a very small proportion of parents completed the questionnaire or came to the parents' meeting held before the inspection. Those who came had many positive things to say about the school but also raised several issues, relating mainly to information on progress, communication and consultation. The amount of information which parents receive about students' progress is typical of that in many other secondary schools. Overall, annual reports on students' progress are good; National Curriculum levels are included for all subjects and most reports indicate what students need to do to improve their work. However, the school is not meeting statutory requirements to provide a report on citizenship. The school is working towards closer academic tracking of students' progress and when this is in place it will be in a position to keep parents more regularly informed about their children's progress.
45. Parents support extra-curricular activities well but, on the whole, parents' involvement in the life of the school is limited. There is considerable scope for the school to strengthen its partnership with parents. The school does not at present seek out parents' views through consulting them on a regular basis. Although parents receive a weekly newsletter, which gives good information about sporting fixtures, it does not give a well-rounded picture of what is going on in the school. Parents do feel that the school is not keeping them well informed about matters that are of concern to them. The school website has not been updated for two years.
46. There are many very good links between the school and its feeder primary schools. Curriculum liaison is developing well. It is particularly strong in mathematics and ICT and this helps ensure a very smooth transition for students in these subjects. There are also very good links between primary schools and the drama and physical education departments. These links provide good leadership opportunities for students to do sports coaching and for drama students to take performances into primary schools. School facilities are used well by the community, both for sports and for evening classes. Good links with the local college and with industry support work-related learning well.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are very good. The leadership of the principal is very good. Governance is very good although some statutory requirements are not being met.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The very good leadership of the principal has set a clear, robust and successful agenda for raising standards and improving the school.
- The senior managers use their complementary skills and expertise very well to form an effective team.
- The governing body are very well informed and play a very active role in celebrating success and bringing about improvements to the school.
- Key curriculum and pastoral staff provide very good leadership and manage their roles well so that students are well supported and achieve high standards.
- Insufficient attention has been given to evaluating the impact on students' achievements and attitudes of the unsatisfactory accommodation and the limited opportunities for them to exercise responsibility.
- The governing body is not meeting statutory requirements with regard to providing a daily act of collective worship for all students, providing religious education for all students in the sixth form and ensuring all students in Years 9, 10 and 11 are taught ICT.

Commentary

47. The principal has been in post for two years and in this short time, with the full support of the governing body, has set a clear, robust and unremitting drive for improvement. The work of senior managers, governors and other key staff is focused to this end. Significant progress has been achieved in ensuring the school is calm and purposeful, and has a good reputation in the community, and that standards and the quality of education across all subjects are improving. The school has gained a number of national awards since the last inspection, notably Technology College status and this has enabled the school to work more closely with the local community and the linked primary schools.
48. Governance of the school is very good. Governors take their roles and responsibilities seriously. Governors are very committed individuals who have a broad range of experiences and expertise, both in the public sector and in the business community. They are very well informed and are acutely aware of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. They have provided very good support to the principal and to senior and middle management of the school, challenging disappointing outcomes in order to bring about improvements whilst celebrating the many and varied successes of the school. They need to consider carefully where the school is not meeting statutory requirements.
49. Overall, the large senior management team provide very good leadership and management. They have a very good range of experience and expertise and this has enabled them to play a major part in the recent good developments. Apart from unsatisfactory leadership and management in citizenship, the leadership of middle managers is mostly very good or good. The leadership and management of special educational needs are satisfactory. There is a need to review the roles of key staff in this department to ensure that the planning of provision is coherent and that existing staff resources are used effectively. There are a small number of teaching assistants who work

hard but do not always have clear enough instructions on how to support students with special educational needs in their lessons.

50. Department leaders and pastoral staff play an important role in ensuring standards are improving. Test and examination results are considered carefully by governors and senior and middle managers and robust action is taken to bring about improvement where standards fall below school and national averages. The school has very good plans in place to raise standards further, with a clear focus on improving curriculum provision and the leadership and management skills of key staff. Teaching and learning are monitored well and good staff development and effective use of performance management have played a significant part in improving the quality of leadership and teaching and learning. Rigorous recruitment procedures ensure new appointments to the school are of high quality and contribute to improving standards.
51. Financial planning and management are very good and have enabled the school to develop well since the last inspection. The school has worked hard to seek additional funding including, for example, achieving Technology College status. These and other additional funds, along with the core budget, are used very well to raise standards, improve leadership and expand the wider experiences of the students. The governors and senior management, who are well supported by the bursar, ensure that financial resources are targeted at identified priorities. As a result the school provides good value for money.
52. The principles of best value are followed well and there has been considerable attention given to improving standards by addressing weaknesses in the curriculum. However, measuring the impact of other aspects of school life on standards of achievement and responding to the views of students have been more limited. The accommodation available to students, in particular toilets, dining areas and access to social spaces, is unsatisfactory. There is limited opportunity for students to exercise responsibility and become active citizens within their own school community and parents are not involved sufficiently in the life of the school. Further work is needed by governors and senior staff to improve these aspects of provision.

Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	6109023
Total expenditure	6059847
Expenditure per student	3 476

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	69817
Balance carried forward to the next	118993

Sixth form

53. The leadership and management of the sixth form are very good. Housed in purpose-built accommodation the sixth form has developed its own identity within the school. Students report a warm and friendly atmosphere, which enables them to settle in very quickly and achieve well. The management team, along with tutors, has generated a strong sense of community which contributes significantly to this very good feature of the school. There is a clear sense of purpose and direction about how the sixth form should develop and sixth form tutors are very clear about their roles.

54. The school has undertaken a detailed analysis of the expenditure and income of the sixth form and this indicates that the sixth form is cost effective. However, the governors and senior management are conscious of the need to provide a comprehensive package of sixth form provision to meet the needs of all students. They are working in partnership with the local education authority and other providers to try to strengthen provision.

OTHER SPECIFIED FEATURES

WORK- RELATED LEARNING

The effectiveness of the school's provision for work-related learning (WRL) is **good**. It meets statutory requirements.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There are very good opportunities for students to meet with employers and higher education institutions.
- Work experience is organised well.
- The provision for WRL is led and managed well.
- Provision for WRL is uneven across the curriculum.

Commentary

55. In recent years, students have reached average standards in GNVQ courses in engineering, ICT and health and social care, which are all taught at a local college of further education. Results for 2004, following a change to vocational GCSE courses, have been less successful and are being analysed to guide future planning. Fifty students in Years 10 and 11 attend the college for a series of taster courses in vocational subjects for one afternoon each week. These are aimed at students who may not otherwise consider further education courses and are proving successful in raising the self-esteem and aspirations of those taking part. Students who were interviewed clearly enjoy their college experience and the large majority have intentions of taking up a further education course with a specific career in mind. They show an increased understanding of health and safety issues and a responsible attitude towards them.
56. The school's programme for WRL is well structured although some elements are more developed than others. Co-operation with businesses and professional bodies is actively promoted through effective links with the e-Business Partnership. In physics, students complete a unit of their coursework through a working visit to a local professional football club; an annual visit to a clothing design unit makes a good contribution to the textiles course. Industry days and enterprise activities, which encourage teamwork and presentation skills, are very popular with students and have a positive effect on their behaviour and attitudes. Provision for WRL through subjects is uneven and is currently under review. In music, it is a well-developed feature of the department with visits to and from numerous music groups and orchestras along with master classes by professional musicians and links to local radio. Effective contact with professionals is also found in links to journalism in English and with business consultants in ICT. In some subjects, however, including geography, history and mathematics, WRL is incidental and there is little evidence of any planned provision. A survey of activities and opportunities to teach WRL across subjects is in progress. An increasing number of vocational courses planned for subjects across the curriculum, in line with the school's Technology College status.

Good preparations, including appropriate appointments of teachers with business experience and training of existing staff through work placements, are in place.

57. Work experience is organised well. All students in Year 11 have the opportunity to undertake work experience although, due to a shortfall in placements, around two thirds of students were asked to find their own work placements this year. The co-ordinator managed the situation very effectively, with the result that sufficient students rose to the challenge and showed very good initiative in finding a wide range of appropriate placements. Co-ordination of support for students is well organised. Preparation, visits and evaluation of work experience are shared amongst form tutors, learning mentors and others who meet regularly to keep an overview of progress. A very good 'Choices' evening for Years 10 and 11 brings together a wide range of local and national employers, colleges and universities. Work experience is seen as having a very positive effect on students' attitudes to school and their understanding of careers options.
58. Students who were interviewed felt that careers guidance was good. A well-structured programme from Year 9 onwards looks at skills and aptitudes for career paths, both academic and vocational, with visiting speakers and mock interviews.
59. The leadership and management of WRL are good. Good structures are in place to promote WRL in all subjects although further work is needed to extend the current examples of good practice across them all.

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 3 AND 4

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

English

Provision in English is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The best teaching is well planned and intellectually challenging.
- Recent developments to the curriculum in Years 7 to 9 have improved the achievement of higher attaining students.
- The new arrangements to improve the achievement of students with learning difficulties are beginning to raise standards.
- Students' attitudes to learning are positive.
- Accommodation for the subject is poor and severely limits the classroom strategies teachers can use.
- The range of styles which teachers use is too narrow, particularly in Years 10 and 11, so students have too few opportunities to discuss their ideas and organise their own work.

Summary of key inspection judgements

Judgement	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Well above average	Well above average
Achievement: whether the standards students reach are as high as they should be	Good	Satisfactory
Attitudes of students to their work	Good	Good
Quality of teaching	Good	Satisfactory
Quality of learning	Good	Satisfactory
Quality of curriculum leadership	Satisfactory	
Management of the department	Satisfactory	
Improvement since the previous inspection	Satisfactory	

60. On entry to the school, standards are above average. Standards in English are well above average throughout the school. In 2003 the results of national tests taken at the end of Year 9 were above average and they improved in 2004. There is good achievement in Year 9 where teachers' effective use of the National Literacy Strategy encourages students to be more actively involved. Well above average standards are maintained in English and English literature through to Year 11 so the achievements of older students are satisfactory. Girls do better than boys throughout, although by less than is the case nationally.
61. Students listen carefully and when there is an opportunity to answer questions and experiment with ideas they respond with enthusiasm, speaking with accuracy and flair. As they move through school they become increasingly confident with difficult concepts in literature. Higher attaining students write fluently, making good use of quotations to illustrate their ideas.

62. Teaching and learning are good up to the end of Year 9. The National Literacy Strategy has been implemented successfully and, as a result, teaching is stronger in Years 7 to 9 than in Years 10 and 11 where it is satisfactory. Lessons are lively and presented with enthusiasm so that students' interest is engaged and sustained. The pace of learning is good, and tasks are varied and carefully structured so that understanding is developed and reinforced. Questioning is challenging and expectations are high. Students respond well, work hard and listen carefully. Standards of behaviour and attitudes to the subject are good. Very good marking gives students constructive and detailed comments and targets to work towards. Relationships between teachers and students are generally good. In the past students with special educational needs did not achieve as well as others but are now achieving in line with higher attaining students because of the recent introduction of specialist teaching and the better planning of work to meet their needs. Teaching and learning are satisfactory in Years 10 and 11. Where teaching is less successful teachers employ a narrow range of styles and students are given too little opportunity to discuss topics or take responsibility for organising their work. The teacher dominates the lesson and students are asked to listen for too long. Questioning is not always well focused and tends to favour boys. Lessons end untidily. Some marking is cursory and unhelpful.
63. Leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory. The department functions as a team despite its large size and other demanding responsibilities held by teachers. The department is developing the use of assessment in Years 7 to 9, and beginning to use data in more focused ways to identify and address underachievement. Planning is detailed and focuses well on the need to arrest the decline in standards of previous years and there is some monitoring of teaching. Although the literacy strategy is now in place in Years 7 to 9, the department has been slow to establish and refine its practice. Curriculum planning for Years 10 and 11 is not yet sufficiently well developed and too little emphasis has been given to the development of teaching and learning styles in these years.
64. Accommodation is poor. Classrooms are cramped and the available space is awkward and too small for the large teaching groups. This restricts the full range of activities which students should enjoy and affects the standards they achieve. Problems of access restrict teachers' use of computers. Staffing arrangements have improved and this year there are fewer split classes and less non-specialist teaching of the subject.
65. Overall improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory. Performance in the Year 9 test declined but is now improving, especially at the higher levels. The GCSE examination results in English have improved and although literature results dipped this year, results were better in 2003 than at the last inspection. Efforts to improve the performance of boys have worked well. The proportion of good or better teaching is not quite as high as at the last inspection.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

66. Standards of literacy are well above average and enable students to make good progress in their work. The development of students' literacy skills is taken seriously by most curriculum areas and has been well co-ordinated and led by the head of English. A number of effective approaches have been introduced across the school. Students' planners contain useful lists of keywords and suggestions for non-fictional writing and note taking. A group of teachers from each curriculum area meet together every half term to discuss issues with respect to literacy. In addition to the good practice in English, there is good practice in most subjects including art and design, music, design and technology,

physical education and religious education. The use of word displays and keywords is well established in many subjects. There are opportunities for extended writing in different styles in history and geography. Some particularly good practice was seen in mathematics where students researched and wrote about famous mathematicians. Year 8 students were using dictionaries to define technical words relating to probability. Registration time is often well used as an opportunity for quiet reading, especially for younger students, and classrooms are equipped with book boxes. The English department encourages personal reading through a regular library lesson.

Modern foreign languages

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Leadership is very good and is focused on raising standards.
- Teaching is good and sometimes very good in most lessons.
- Students, including those with special educational needs, achieve well.
- Visits to France, Germany and Spain enhance the curriculum very well.
- Boys underachieve in some classes in Years 8 to 10.

Summary of key inspection judgements

Judgement	Year 9	Year 11
Standards of work seen during the inspection	Above average	Above average
Achievement: whether the standards students reach are as high as they should be	Good	Good
Attitudes of students to their work	Good	Good
Quality of teaching	Good	Good
Quality of learning	Good	Good
Quality of curriculum leadership	Very good Good Satisfactory	
Management of the department		
Improvement since the previous inspection		

Commentary

67. This is an improving faculty as a result of improved leadership at both faculty and school level. There is now a clear commitment to raising standards, and planning for subject developments is good. The whole school is interested in French, German and Spanish, as is made clear through posters and labels on most doors throughout the school. Students are eager to find out when they can go on a trip to the country where the language they are learning is spoken. Half the students take French, and the other half is divided into German and Spanish bands. Those with strong family reasons may choose which language they take and there is some opportunity, within the very limited time available in Year 9, for gifted students to take a second foreign language.
68. In 2003 the GCSE results were well above average in Spanish, above average in French but well below average in German. In French and German, girls did as well as boys did nationally in relation to their other subjects, but boys did not achieve as well as they should have done. The results in Spanish were exceptional in 2003 but were not as strong in 2004, when French and German both improved. A few students gained the highest grade of A* in French and Spanish. All those entered for GCSE gained at least a grade G and in 2004, for the first time, a small group of low attainers successfully took a Certificate of Achievement course in German. This has since been extended to all languages in Year 11.
69. In Year 9, teachers' assessments indicate that standards were below average in 2002 and 2003 but these improved markedly in 2004, most clearly in French, and standards were above average. This last group were the first students for whom a foreign language was an option in Years 10 and 11; approximately half chose to continue with their language, which is a higher proportion than in many schools nationally. Achievement

overall is good in all years although girls are doing significantly better than boys, some of whom are underachieving.

70. Students are grouped in such a way as to ensure that tasks can be best matched to their level of attainment. This benefits all students, especially those with special educational needs. In Years 7 and 8 groups of students with special needs taking French were seen responding enthusiastically and learning effectively. Teachers' use of *PowerPoint* helps them to learn well and the timetable of three periods a week facilitates their studies well.
71. Subject planning is well co-ordinated and standardised across the languages but lesson planning is insufficiently developed to ensure that time is used to the full in all lessons, as it is in the very good lessons. Some very good teaching occurs in all languages and at all levels. Overall teaching and learning are good across the school. One Spanish class was observed doing good work with computers, although the computers in classrooms are not used enough, and Internet-based work is not yet well enough developed. There is, at present, only one interactive whiteboard, which is well used. The school is particularly fortunate in its recruitment of temporary teachers; both those working in school are native language speakers. Teachers are well supported by the French and German *assistantes*. Resources used in the faculty are adequate to maintain present standards but are insufficient to raise standards by encouraging students to work more on their own. Accommodation is satisfactory except for one windowless and airless room.
72. Assessment based on course units is good because it involves students in setting their own targets in all four language skills. The paper-based system is effective in ensuring that this information follows the individual learner when he or she moves on to the next teacher. The fact that language classrooms are together, a recent improvement, ensures ready communication, and the head of faculty knows her colleagues very well. Collectively, they put great efforts into study visits to France and Spain and to maintaining a successful exchange link with a school in Fritzlar, Germany. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory, and there is the capacity for further improvement.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **excellent**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good teaching leads to high standards and very good achievement.
- Leadership of the subject is excellent.
- Teachers have very high expectations and provide very good support so that students can tackle challenging work.
- Students have excellent attitudes and enjoy learning mathematics; consequently many take mathematics subjects in the sixth form.
- Students are very well prepared for the tests and examinations.
- More opportunities need to be given for students to develop their skills of independent learning.

Summary of key inspection judgements

Judgement	Year 9	Year 11
Standards of work seen during the inspection	Very high	Very high
Achievement: whether the standards students reach are as high	Very good	Very good

as they should be		
Attitudes of students to their work	Excellent	Excellent
Quality of teaching	Very good	Very good
Quality of learning	Very good	Very good
Quality of curriculum leadership	Excellent	
Management of the department	Very good	
Improvement since the previous inspection	Very good	

73. Achievement is very good in Years 7 to 9 and in Years 10 and 11. Students start school with above average standards and these are developed very well so that standards in the national tests at the end of Year 9 in 2003 were well above the national average and were above average compared with similar schools. This position has improved in 2004. Standards of work seen were very high and reflected the standards in previous year's tests. In 2003, the results in the GCSE examinations were similarly well above the national average. The results improved again in 2004, with three-quarters of all students achieving grades A*-C, well above the national and the school's average. Standards of work seen are very high. Trends over time show improvement in the Year 9 tests and in the GCSE examination results. Overall, boys achieve as well as girls. Students with special educational needs achieve very well, as do those students from minority ethnic groups. The achievement of gifted and talented students is excellent with significant numbers of students achieving the higher levels in the Year 9 tests and a remarkable one in five students achieving the highest grades of A and A* grades in the GCSE examinations.
74. These high standards are the direct results of good, very good and occasionally excellent teaching, which is well planned, carefully targeted at the test and examination requirements and skilfully and consistently taught by a large team of staff. High expectations are set at all levels and with students of all abilities. Work beyond the requirements of the syllabus is often introduced, requiring students to 'punch above their weight'. This approach enables students to develop rapidly their skills and understanding. Students' attitudes to the subject and their learning are very good, which, combined with the calm, purposeful, friendly but rigorous manner displayed by all staff, enable students to achieve very well. No unsatisfactory lessons were seen during the inspection but in the rare satisfactory and in some of the good lessons seen, students were not given enough opportunity to develop independent learning skills and relied too much on their teacher's good direction. Overall, assessment procedures are very good. Students' performance is tracked well and challenging targets are set. Marking for accuracy is thorough and comments on how to improve are used well but there are some inconsistencies of practice across the department.
75. Overall accommodation and resources are good. Displays in mathematics rooms are used well to enhance learning and identify what is required to reach the different levels in the examinations. The departmental ICT suite is used well to improve learning, although it is too small to meet the needs of all students. Very good use is made of students' access to computers at home and the 'website of the week' provides very good stimulus for this. The department has two interactive whiteboards but during the inspection these were out of commission and consequently limited the overall quality of teaching and learning in these lessons. The curriculum is extended well as able students can take an additional qualification in statistics. Standard in statistics are well above average and students' achievement is very good.
76. Leadership is excellent. Both teachers and students recognise how important a subject mathematics is, and many want to continue with their studies beyond Year 11. The new

head of department has an excellent understanding of the current national expectations for the subject and has the capacity and determination to improve the provision, ably supported by an already excellent self-critical and self-supporting team. The department is very well organised and managed and policies and procedures are consistently and persistently followed. Good developmental work has been done for work-related learning and citizenship but further work is required to incorporate these fully into the schemes of work. There has been very good improvement since the last inspection.

Mathematics across the curriculum

77. Overall standards are above average. The high standards achieved in the mathematics lessons enable students to use their skills, knowledge and understanding well in other subjects. For example, students use mathematical skills well in design and technology, geography, ICT and physical education for manipulating and interpreting measurements and data. Many departments have identified opportunities for mathematical development but are not explicitly planning this into their lessons. The work undertaken in the last two years to develop cross-curricular approaches is now in need of revisiting to ensure consistency across all departments.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards in the Year 9 national tests have been well above average and students have achieved well.
- Some average attaining students have not done as well in science as in other subjects in recent GCSE examinations.
- Standards in Year 9 are improving well and achievement is good.
- Higher attaining students do well in the separate science subjects at GCSE.
- Laboratories are not furnished or equipped to modern standards and this restricts learning.

Summary of key inspection judgements

Judgement	Year 9	Year 11
Standards of work seen during the inspection	Above average	Above average
Achievement: whether the standards students reach are as high as they should be	Good	Satisfactory
Attitudes of students to their work	Very good	Very good
Quality of teaching	Good	Satisfactory
Quality of learning	Good	Satisfactory
Quality of curriculum leadership	Good	
Management of the department	Good	
Improvement since the previous inspection	Unsatisfactory	

Commentary

78. Students enter the school with above average results in science, and reach well above average standards in the national tests at the end of Year 9. Boys' and girls' results are similar. Over the past three years, the science results have been higher than in English, but lower than in mathematics. The percentage of pupils reaching the higher levels is much greater than the national average. During the inspection, standards by Year 9 are above average and are improving. By Year 11, students taking separate sciences attain above average results, with the results in chemistry lower than those in biology and physics. The results of students following the double award course in science are close to the national average, with boys attaining better standards than the girls. Overall, when combined with the triple award, the results in 2003 were at the national average but below the results of the same students in English and mathematics, indicating some underachievement by average attaining students following the double award course. All students taking the triple award have reached a grade C or higher in the past year. The very few students from minority ethnic backgrounds achieve similar results to other students.

79. The achievement of students is good by Year 9 and satisfactory by Year 11, with evidence of improving standards in the current Year 10 who did well in the science tests at the end of Year 9. Able students generally do well. The analysis of results for different groups of students across subjects is carried out at school level but the use of such information within science is only just beginning. During the past year, the school has taken action to improve achievement by implementing the good practice teaching ideas from the

National Science Strategy and this is now beginning to have a positive effect on teaching and learning practices with older students as well. . There is a shortage of modern audio-visual teaching aids and teachers change between laboratories nearly every lesson. Fixed benches in science laboratories restrict the range of learning activities and the 50-minute lesson is sometimes too short for experimental work. All students have two, or sometimes three, science teachers each week and there is no provision for double lessons at the moment. A few classes are timetabled outside laboratories, while at other times laboratories are under-used.

80. The use of ICT within laboratories, especially for data logging, is underdeveloped and there are no Internet points, although these are to be introduced shortly. In the past two years, there have been a number of staffing changes, including the appointment of a new head of faculty, which are helping to address the issue of underachievement by some students. The most important of these is the emphasis on improving teaching and learning strategies. Teaching is now better than suggested by the results reached by students in the past two years and is beginning to have a positive impact on achievement, particularly in Years 7 to 9. During the inspection, students concentrated very well in lessons and had positive attitudes to learning. Other very recent initiatives include the closer monitoring of the progress of students, better use of assessment data to monitor progress, the introduction of target setting and the appointment of a co-ordinator of the Year 7 to 9 curriculum.
81. Teaching is good in Years 7 to 9, satisfactory in Year 10 and good overall. The best teaching features an appropriate choice of class practical, demonstration, or discussion work that helps to develop scientific thinking and understanding. The best lessons encourage students to become curious, are carefully structured to make the best use of time and have learning objectives which are carefully selected to match the past achievement level of the students. The few students with learning difficulties are fully integrated into lessons and make good progress, and teachers are careful to build upon prior knowledge, as seen in a lesson on the human skeleton. Most teachers have good questioning techniques and students participate willingly in question and answer sessions at the end of each lesson. Students are good at communicating their learning to others, work safely in small groups and extend their learning through a variety of homework tasks. Learning is also enhanced by the use of vocabulary boards. They are confident in numeracy when using tables and graphs.
82. Lessons that are less successful sometimes omit a demonstration or practical activity that would enhance the learning experience, or put too much emphasis on work from textbooks, the completion of worksheets or direct teaching. Applications of science outside the laboratory are usually discussed well but lack the impact of, for example, a short video sequence. Work in exercise books is well matched to the needs of students in the different sets and is being extended by newly-introduced homework workbooks for Years 10 and 11.
83. The leadership of the new head of faculty is good as there is a clear vision about what needs to be achieved and there has already been good progress in the past year. There is evidence of a growing sense of collaborative teamwork. Management of the subject is also good. There are now effective systems for managing the practical apparatus and very good technical support. Better systems for monitoring the progress of students are in place. There remain a number of important further areas of development, including planned professional development for staff to match the needs of the curriculum, building

stronger links with subject associations and industry and maintaining as a priority the emphasis on improving teaching and learning at all levels and age groups.

84. Improvements since the last inspection are mixed. Standards are not as high but are now showing signs of improvement. Shorter-term strategies involving improving teaching and learning are already proving to be successful. There has also been an improvement in the leadership of the subject in the past year. However, progress overall since the last inspection has been unsatisfactory.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good teaching engages students and is raising standards.
- Students' attitudes are very positive and help to extend their learning.
- Strong procedures to assess and set targets are improving achievement.
- A variety of high-quality resources support learning well.
- Very good leadership and management ensure students achieve very well.
- The school does not fully meet statutory requirements in Years 9 to 11 as not all students experience all the elements of the National Curriculum.

Summary of key inspection judgements

Judgement	Year 9	Year 11
Standards of work seen during the inspection	Above average	Well above average
Achievement	Good	Very good
Attitudes of students to their work	Good	Good
Quality of teaching	Very good	Very good
Quality of learning	Very good	Very good
Quality of curriculum leadership	Very good	
Management of the department	Very good	
Improvement since the previous inspection	Good	

Commentary

85. Teachers' assessments at the end of Year 9 in 2003 were above average and this position continued in 2004. Standards of work are currently above average. Students use ICT with confidence and competence. They create attractive presentations for specific audiences. They include sound clips and recordings that match and enhance the text. This represents good achievement. The Year 11 GCSE examination results for 2003 were above average. The provisional results for 2004 remain at a similar level. The students completed the course in one year with lessons after school. Standards of work in the GCSE examination course are now well above average. Students evaluate websites constructively, identifying good features and why they are eye-catching. They create attractive leaflets to advertise a fast food shop. Students use a wide range of advanced skills and understand how ICT is used in the real world. This represents very good achievement.

86. The quality of teaching and learning in all years is very good. All lessons are very well planned to extend students' learning. Teachers' very good use of ICT and their stimulating teaching styles engage students well and, as a result, they are very clear about what they have to do. Very good resources in class and on the school network allow students to work independently. Teachers set high expectations in both work and behaviour to support learning. They build excellent relationships with students, who respond enthusiastically and engross themselves in their work. Tasks are sensitively matched to the needs of students, so all make good progress, with the higher attaining students being stretched well. There is no significant difference between the achievement of boys and girls, although more boys follow the examination courses. Very good use of target setting, with clear explanations, ensures students know exactly what they have to do to reach certain grades and levels, although they do not assess their own work. Marking is very clear, with comments that help students understand how to improve. Writing frames are used to develop students' literacy skills, and a wide range of spreadsheet activities contributes well to their numeracy development.
87. The leadership and management of the ICT department are very good. An extremely clear vision of how to move forward has resulted in significant improvement in standards. Thorough self-evaluation has shaped a strategy for further progress and all teachers are clear what they are working towards. Very confident management has created a co-ordinated and energetic team of specialist teachers and support staff. The courses and resources are competently managed so students get the best out of their ICT lessons. Very good procedures are in place to guide all aspects of the work of the department. However, not all pupils receive their full entitlement to ICT experiences, as it is not taught discretely in Years 9 to 11. There is some use of ICT in other subjects in these years, but elements of the National Curriculum, such as modelling, measurement and control, are not delivered to all students.
88. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. More resources have enabled students to become very competent in ICT. Conscientious and enthusiastic leadership and management have improved students' standards.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

89. The provision for ICT across the curriculum is satisfactory and students achieve well. A number of teachers use ICT effectively to enhance the presentation of lesson topics. In some subjects, such as music, physical education and drama, students extend their knowledge and understanding through ICT activities. In other subjects, students use ICT well to present work in an interesting and organised way. However, further development is restricted because not enough ICT resources have been distributed around the school. There is no policy for the mapping and monitoring of how other subjects make their contribution to ICT and not all subjects make effective use of ICT to support teaching and learning. There is now a clear vision and plan for what the school has to do to extend this aspect of students' learning.

HUMANITIES

Geography

Provision in geography is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve well and, as a result, the GCSE examination results have improved.
- Teaching and learning are very good and encourage high standards.
- Teachers' assessment and marking of students' work do not always make it clear how students can improve.
- There are too few opportunities for students to use ICT.

Summary of key inspection judgements

Judgement	Year 9	Year 11
Standards of work seen during the inspection	Above average	Well above average
Achievement: whether the standards students reach are as high as they should be	Good	Good
Attitudes of students to their work	Very good	Very good
Quality of teaching	Very good	Very good
Quality of learning	Very good	Very good
Quality of curriculum leadership	Very good Very good Good	
Management of the department		
Improvement since the previous inspection		

Commentary

90. When students enter the school in Year 7, their standards are similar to those found nationally. By the end of Year 9, all students make good progress, including those with special educational needs, and standards are above average. In Years 7 to 9, students gain a good knowledge and understanding of the subject. They apply well an increasing range of geographical skills. Students record accurately micro-climatic details in Year 7 and by Year 9 they can calculate well the difference in social measures between the lesser and more economically developed countries. The most able students prepared a newspaper item to report the *Tokyo-Kobe Killer* which was of an exceptionally high standard. Lower attaining students and those with special educational needs find the work more difficult and need help to record events accurately. However, there are not enough opportunities for students to use ICT which would help to raise standards further.
91. Standards by the end of Year 11 are above average. The GCSE examination results in 2002 were similar to the national average. These have improved and in 2003 were above those found nationally. Girls achieved better than boys and were well above the standards attained by girls nationally. The situation was similar in 2004. However, all students, including those with special educational needs, achieve well by Year 11.
92. In Year 10, students confidently identify glacial features and the conflicts of interest within the National Parks. The most able, including the few students from minority ethnic backgrounds, can offer a range of solutions and students with special educational needs make valid contributions. Students use well a wide range of geographical skills, knowledge and understanding to support their urban coursework. The most able students are able to consider theoretical principles, hypothesise, and work collectively and independently to analyse the quality of life from their data, using ICT appropriately. Some lower attaining students find the tasks more difficult and the brevity of their work has a negative impact overall on their progress.

93. Teaching and learning are very good in Years 7 to 11. Students benefit from experienced, enthusiastic and very well informed teaching. Lessons are very well planned to present the subject in an interesting way. Probing question and answer sessions incorporate references to the classroom display. These parts of lessons are often excellent. However, on occasions, lessons are slow to start and the work set for lower attaining students does not sufficiently match their needs.
94. Subject leadership is very good. The team are keen to raise standards. Teaching has improved following the introduction of the revised and more user-friendly schemes of work and the improvement in resources. Management is efficient and the department is well organised. Parents contribute to the students' self-evaluation of their work although teachers' assessments lack sufficient guidance to promote higher standards. Improvement since the last inspection has been good.

History

Provision in history is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The subject leader supports her team and temporary teachers very well.
- Students achieve well in this popular subject and the GCSE examination results are consistently above average and sometimes higher than this.
- Assessment does not always inform students well enough about how to improve their work.
- There is insufficient departmental provision for ICT.

Summary of key inspection judgements

Judgement	Year 9	Year 11
Standards of work seen during the inspection	Above average	Above average
Achievement: whether the standards students reach are as high as they should be	Good	Good
Attitudes of students to their work	Good	Good
Quality of teaching	Good	Good
Quality of learning	Good	Good
Quality of curriculum leadership	Very good Good Good	
Management of the department		
Improvement since the previous inspection		

Commentary

95. On entry to the school, students' skills, knowledge and understanding of history are similar to those found nationally. By the end of Year 9 the standards of work of girls and boys from all ethnic backgrounds are above average. All students achieve well in Years 7 to 9 and gain a good knowledge and understanding of the subject. The most able students achieve very well from Year 7 and give articulate and confident mini-presentations to explain historical events. By Year 9, all students use historical evidence skillfully to identify with the conditions in the trenches during World War I. Teachers' assessments of standards at the end of Year 9 are above the national average.

96. Standards by the end of Year 11 are above average. The GCSE examination results in 2003 were well above the national average. This represented good achievement for all students, including those with special educational needs. However, the GCSE examination results in 2004 were lower than in 2003. Currently, the GCSE examination board is reviewing the lower than expected coursework marks. In addition, teacher absence disrupted students' achievement. During the inspection, all students in Year 10 gained a good knowledge and understanding of history. In Year 11, students compare well the mood of the British public at the beginning of the two World Wars. Their coursework is of a high standard and all students can analyse and explain the plight of evacuees, using relevant source materials. Achievement overall is good.
97. Overall, teaching and learning are good in Years 7 to 9 and Years 10 and 11. There are examples of excellent and very good teaching in Years 7 to 9. Specialist teachers are well informed and their thorough lesson planning helps to retain the interest of students and encourages them to extend their learning through independent research. Teachers use well interesting resources and video excerpts which encourage students to learn at a good pace and respond coherently to brisk question and answer sessions. However, the unsatisfactory behavior of a minority of lower attaining Year 7 students disrupts their learning and their achievement is unsatisfactory. Smaller groups in Years 8 and 9 respond very well to effective classroom teaching. The achievement of students with special educational needs is at least satisfactory and often better. However, as in the last inspection, ICT remains underdeveloped because it is difficult to gain access to resources within the department. Marking is regular but there is insufficient advice given to students about how they can improve their work.
98. The subject leader is dedicated to her role and has a clear vision of what needs to be done to sustain standards and to communicate her enjoyment of history. The department is experiencing an unusual amount of disruption due to staff absence. Currently, the emergency timetable provides too few opportunities for the subject leader to oversee the department during the school day. However, teachers are very supportive. The schemes for learning are being updated and the department continues to function effectively. There are too few support assistants for younger students with special educational needs to achieve as well as they should. Nevertheless, improvement since the last inspection has been good. Leadership is very good and, in difficult circumstances, the department is being managed well.

Religious education

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards in public examinations have been well above the national average for two years.
- Students achieve very well in examinations, and across the school.
- Teaching is generally lively and engaging so that students want to learn.
- More good quality books are needed to support learning in the first three years.

Summary of key inspection judgements

Judgement	Year 9	Year 11
Standards of work seen during the inspection	Above average	Above average
Achievement: whether the standards students reach are as high as they should be	Good	Very good
Attitudes of students to their work	Very good	Very good
Quality of teaching	Good	Very good
Quality of learning	Good	Very good
Quality of curriculum leadership	Very good	
Management of the department	Very good	
Improvement since the previous inspection	Very good	

Commentary

99. This is a very good department where students are stimulated to learn as a result of lively teaching. As a result, students' attitudes and behaviour are very good and most are well motivated to succeed.
100. All students in Year 11 follow the GCSE short course examination for this subject, an innovation since the last inspection. In 2003, results were well above the national average for students gaining grades A*-C, and they achieved better in this subject than in most other subjects. In 2004, the results were very similar.
101. At an early stage of the school year, standards seen in Year 10 lessons and in Year 11 work folders are already above average. Students understand a range of moral issues well and know that there are varied religious views and attitudes towards them. Higher attaining students write fluently and come to well-reasoned conclusions. There are no significant differences in the progress made by boys and girls or students from ethnic minority backgrounds.
102. By Year 9, students are already working at above average levels. In the time available, they acquire a sound grasp of the key features of the major world religions and demonstrate good levels of in-depth knowledge and understanding in their independent studies, where they make effective use of ICT skills. They show a mature understanding of how people's beliefs shape their values and lifestyles. There are no significant differences in the achievement of boys and girls, higher attaining students, or those with special educational needs. Students begin work for the short course GCSE examination in Year 9 and this helps to raise standards and to prepare them well for the next stage of their studies. Their achievement is good and standards are consistently above average in teachers' assessments at the end of Year 9.
103. The above average standards result from the good quality of the teaching. In all the lessons seen the teaching was good or very good. The best lessons, especially in Year 10, are characterised by lively methods that engaged students' interest well, such as the effective use of *PowerPoint*. There are always high expectations and a good pace. All the teachers control their classes very effectively. They give students good opportunities to work independently and in groups, and to develop well their presentation skills. Access to ICT rooms is limited and this restricts opportunities for individual work as does a shortage of books for the younger years. This was very apparent when three Year 8 classes were being taught at the same time. Teachers do their best to compensate by producing good quality resources in-house.

104. Teachers meet the needs of students with special educational needs effectively. Lessons boost literacy well, especially through the insistence on learning and using appropriate terms accurately. Teachers are skilled at planning how to draw out learning from religions so that students can relate topics to their own lives and experience. Lessons give very good opportunities for students' personal development, including education about cultural diversity.

105. Leadership and management of the subject are both very good, as is improvement since the last inspection. High standards have been maintained, and there have been significant innovations such as the short course GCSE examination and the introduction of an effective assessment system in Years 7 to 9. Criteria for success are shared clearly with students and this helps to motivate them. The teaching team is given very good levels of support, especially the newly-qualified and graduate trainees. Reviews, analysis and future planning are all very thorough.

TECHNOLOGY

Design and technology

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students' achievement is very good in all years because the wide range of experiences provided stimulates and creates high levels of interest.
- Students in all years make very good gains in knowledge, skills and understanding, which result in very high standards of work.
- Very good teaching promotes the production of high quality products.
- Students in Years 7, 8 and 9 have the opportunity to experience and use a broad range of materials and processes.
- Students entering Year 10 have a good range of examination course choices.
- The quality of some accommodation in the food area is unsatisfactory and has an impact on standards.

Summary of key inspection judgements

Judgement	Year 9	Year 11
Standards of work seen during the inspection	Well above average	Well above average
Achievement: whether the standards students reach are as high as they should be	Very good	Very good
Attitudes of students to their work	Very good	Very good
Quality of teaching	Very good	Very good
Quality of learning	Very good	Very good
Quality of curriculum leadership	Very good Very good Good	
Management of the department		
Improvement since the previous inspection		

Commentary

106. Students enter the school with average standards of attainment in the subject. During their first three years in the school, students make very good gains in their knowledge and understanding in all aspects of the subject. Students understand the purpose of the design process and apply that understanding through a very good range of experiences in different media. By the end of Year 9 standards are well above average. Girls achieve more highly than boys but all students achieve well in comparison to students across the country.
107. By the end of Year 11 standards are very high. Students continue to develop their knowledge and skills in specialist areas. The GCSE examination results are well above the national averages. The provisional results for 2004 show that the results are high in all areas. Students with special educational needs and those from different cultural backgrounds perform as well as other students. Work seen during the inspection indicates a high level of understanding of design with very good integration of computer-generated designs and traditional drawing. Students make good use of the computer-aided design facilities, in spite of the restricted space within the department. Those taking food and textiles technology have limited equipment within the area. Students are highly motivated to achieve very well and do so. They show a keen interest in producing high quality products, which are representative of a range of innovative designs. Achievement by Year 11 is very good.
108. Teaching is very good. Teachers have a very good command of their subject, which is evident in their planning. In the majority of lessons across Years 7 to 11, students are encouraged to learn and are engaged well in lessons. Teachers have high expectations and generally provide the correct level of challenge for all groups. They recognise the special needs of some groups of students and through additional support, enable those students to achieve at an equivalent level to their peers. Where teaching is least effective, the management of students and classroom organisation are not good enough and this affects learning. These lessons are over-directed by teachers and learning objectives are unclear.
109. Curriculum opportunities are very good and provide a range of choices promoting high achievement. Programmes in the first three years allow students to develop their designing and making skills, using both traditional and modern materials. Through using the expertise in the subject and visits to industrial sites, students broaden their knowledge and experience of industrial applications. Students have a good understanding of National Curriculum levels and have target grades set. Whilst there is student self-assessment, this requires further development so that students know more precisely what they need to do to improve. Teachers make very good use of the assessment information they gather to help them plan their lessons.
110. Leadership of the subject is very effective. Very good management has created a cohesive and dynamic team. All members of the department are committed to achieving the highest possible standards. There is a clear vision and direction. Those responsible for the various disciplines are well aware of the areas requiring improvement and work with the head of department to this end. Staff work hard to overcome the problems created by the poor accommodation in some of the food rooms, which restrict opportunities for individual and group work. Support staff are very good and are effectively deployed to improve teaching and learning.
111. Improvement since the last inspection has been good because, in a large department covering a range of specialist areas, standards have been maintained. Changes in

equipment and examination requirements have been adopted successfully with no detrimental effect on overall achievement.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

Art and design

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is very good individual support for students.
- Teachers prepare their lessons well and make efficient use of time.
- The facilities for ICT within the department are inadequate.
- The provision for ceramics is very good.
- There is insufficient use of assessment data to guide the department's planning.

Summary of key inspection judgements

Judgement	Year 9	Year 11
Standards of work seen during the inspection	Above average	Well above average
Achievement: whether the standards students reach are as high as they should be	Good	Good
Attitudes of students to their work	Very good	Very good
Quality of teaching	Good	Good
Quality of learning	Good	Good
Quality of curriculum leadership	Good Good Satisfactory	
Management of the department		
Improvement since the previous inspection		

Commentary

112. Students enter Year 7 with very mixed experiences of art and design and their overall attainment is average. Through a closely guided series of projects, students gain a sound foundation of skills in drawing, painting and ceramics. Lower attaining students, and those with special educational needs, benefit from the structured approach and quickly gain competence in a good variety of materials. By Year 9, standards are above average, representing good achievement over the first three years. Teachers' assessments of standards at the end of Year 9 have been very high over recent years although, in hindsight, they have been over generous through placing too much emphasis on technical skill.
113. The GCSE examination results in 2003 were well above the national average with almost nine out of ten students gaining grades A*-C. Boys and girls attained equally well. By Year 11, standards of work are well above average, showing continuing good achievement over the GCSE course. In Years 10 and 11, students build on their skills in drawing and painting, with evident strengths in still life and portraiture. Students taking the GCSE three-dimensional design course create soundly constructed ceramic pieces, supported with well-presented research in sketchbooks. Students use the Internet effectively to research artists' works. The lack of adequate ICT facilities within the department restricts opportunities for students to manipulate and explore alternatives when developing their own ideas and imagery.
114. The quality of teaching and learning is good across the age range. Teachers prepare their lessons well to make full use of the short 50-minute sessions. Skills and techniques are taught thoroughly through well-planned exercises, giving students a sound base from which to develop. Well-pitched question and answer sessions encourage students to make good use of an appropriate art and design vocabulary. Occasionally, in Years 7 to 9, the lessons are controlled too tightly and give insufficient opportunities for higher attainers to show their individuality. Very good one-to-one support ensures students' understanding of the tasks and very good assessments of work in progress inform them of how well they are doing and how to improve. Teachers' assessments against the National Curriculum levels at the end of Year 9 are not secure. There is no collection of artwork to standardise judgements across the department and act as a reference for teachers and students. In Years 10 and 11 the experienced team of teachers show a strong knowledge of art and design through clear, confident demonstrations. Students in ceramics lessons respond particularly well to the trust and responsibility that the teachers allow them. Accommodation is satisfactory overall although the recently improved accommodation for ceramics is very good and extends access to the whole age range.

115. Leadership and management are good. The head of department has set out a clear vision for the department that emphasises support for students of all backgrounds and abilities. The experienced teachers form a well-established and effective team. Aspirations for future developments in assessment and ICT are hindered by limited opportunities to share experiences with other art and design departments. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory.

Music

Provision in music is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is very good and is based on the excellent skills, subject knowledge and lesson planning of the music staff.
- Relationships between staff and students are good.
- A wide range of curricular opportunities is provided for the students.
- Staff and students use well the excellent resources available to them.
- Accommodation is very poor and has an adverse effect on all aspects of musical education within the school.
- Changes of priorities and planning in the school have resulted in some expensive ICT resources for music being unused and possibly wasted.

Summary of key inspection judgements

Judgement	Year 9	Year 11
Standards of work seen during the inspection	Average	Above average
Achievement: whether the standards students reach are as high as they should be	Above average	Well above average
Attitudes of students to their work	Good	Very good
Quality of teaching	Good	Very good
Quality of learning	Good	Very good
Quality of curriculum leadership	Very good Very good Good	
Management of the department		
Improvement since the previous inspection		

Commentary

116. This is a very good music department, providing a wide range of musical activities for many students, despite the poor accommodation. Standards by the end of Year 9 match the national average for the age group, but this judgement does not reflect the exceptional breadth of music experiences students receive at this school. The GCSE examination results are above the national average. Students in Year 10 display good performance skills and knowledge of musical conventions. All students achieve well because of high expectations, interesting and stimulating curricular opportunities, self-motivation and a desire to do well. As a result, when students and students have the chance to opt for music, their achievement is very good.

117. Teaching is very good overall, with one excellent lesson observed in Year 10. The strong teaching is characterised by a high level of subject knowledge, some inventive demonstrations on instruments, very good relationships with the learners and the first-rate

planning, which always includes linked starter activities. Where learning is good or better, students' progress is aided by the teachers' use of a range of strategies that ensures that students understand what it is that they are supposed to learn. The learning is further enhanced by the self-motivation of the young musicians, and their ability and commitment to do extra work outside lessons. Their knowledge of this good progress is consolidated by the very good assessment system. Students in Years 7 to 9, for example, benefit from an excellent booklet that helps them to chart their own progress through each module, linking this progress explicitly to National Curriculum levels, as well as offering advice on spelling of music-specific words and how to reach the next level.

118. Leadership and management of the music department are very good. The dedication of the head of department ensures consistency and good support from the other teachers, as well as providing good professional development for them and the students undergoing teacher training. There is thorough, realistic evaluation of the department's strengths and weaknesses, which has already resulted in planning for improvement. Similarly, the clear insight into the changing needs of students and the sensitive response to the few disaffected students result in a very inclusive subject. The strength of leadership and management, and of the department itself, is particularly remarkable given the lack of outside support or contact.

119. The poor accommodation is having an adverse effect on teaching, learning, standards and achievement, particularly in Years 7 to 9. The issue of a third non-specialist teaching room has not been addressed since well before the last inspection. The two specialist classrooms are small and inhibit the amount of paired and group work that can take place in large classes. The teachers do very well to minimise the effects of this. The work of the department is enhanced by plentiful resources, some peripatetic instrumental provision and visits to and from musicians offering work-related learning advice to the students, as well as opportunities to watch professional musicians at work. There are, at present, insufficient opportunities for using ICT to complement the learning, despite the purchase of substantial amounts of hardware and software, including mother keyboards and *Cubase*. Many of these expensive resources have not been used.

120. Improvement since the last inspection has been good because standards and results have been maintained, despite frequent changes in staffing, due to promotion. The main barrier to further improvement is the poor accommodation.

Drama

Provision in drama is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The results in GCSE examinations are excellent.
- Very good teaching caters well for the individual needs of a wide range of ability.
- Relationships are often excellent and result in a high degree of commitment to work by students and teachers.
- Some aspects of health and safety are unsatisfactory.

Summary of key inspection judgements

Judgement	Year 9	Year 11
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Standards of work seen during the inspection	Above average	Well above average*
Achievement: whether the standards students reach are as high as they should be	Good	Very good*
Attitudes of students to their work	Good	Very good
Quality of teaching	Good	Very good
Quality of learning	Good	Very good
Quality of curriculum leadership	Very good	
Management of the department	Very good	
Improvement since the previous inspection	Good	

*As Year 11 were on work experience, judgements are based on available written work

Commentary

121. Standards in the GCSE drama examinations have been excellent in recent years with nearly all students gaining at least a grade C. More than one in five students gained the highest grade of A*. The majority of students who opt for drama are girls and they perform better than boys in general. Achievement, in lessons and over time, is very good in Years 10 and 11. Students of all abilities make significant gains in understanding dramatic techniques and terminology, as the results show. All students study drama in their first three years at the school and students attain above expected standards by the time they reach Year 9. This represents good achievement. By Year 11 students have continued to achieve very well and standards are very high.
122. The quality of teaching is very good. It is rarely less than good. Teachers know their subject well and their explanations and demonstrations give students the confidence to experiment with a wide range of drama. Teachers enter into role to help younger students understand the principles of stagecraft and build up their skills from simple mime and freeze frames to more complex actions using slow motion and different vocal ranges. The planning provides good opportunities for students to use ICT for research, and the links with English are very good. Students study the stage effects of Shakespeare and develop their speaking and listening in practical ways. Literacy skills are emphasised constantly, as in a Year 7 lesson, for example, when the teacher asked, "What does a simulator do?"
123. Students have a good knowledge of technical terms and different genres and bring them into their drama discussions such as referring to 'physical drama' when prompted by good questions from the teacher to reinforce their understanding. Teaching is characterised by brisk and lucid openings and a sense of enjoyment. At times, some boys in Year 9 lack the maturity to concentrate during discussions but their practical work is often good. Students' learning develops rapidly because the drama course has a clear structure that helps them to refine their performance skills.
124. Relationships in all lessons are excellent with students quickly getting into the routines required. They work very well together and their ideas for improvisations are very imaginative and thought provoking. Students gain good awareness of a range of human emotions and explore the complexities of life through drama. Their response is both sensitive and mature.
125. Resources are good but there are some problems with the accommodation. One room is used for a variety of other purposes and is often left dirty and unsuitable for drama, despite the good facilities it offers. This is a health and safety issue for the school to address. In addition, students' dress is not always best suited for a practical lesson.

126. The leadership of the department is dynamic and the management very good too. The head of department analyses trends in attainment from the data provided for her, carefully assesses what needs to be done and sets very relevant targets for the department. She clearly involves her team in the planning and works with them to rectify weaknesses. The high standards have been maintained since the last inspection because the teachers have remained focused and committed.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good leadership and management are helping to raise standards.
- Very good teaching enables pupils to acquire new skills and develop existing ones effectively.
- Excellent provision of extra-curricular activities enriches students' learning opportunities.
- Pupils constantly evaluate their own performance and that of others to consolidate learning and set targets for improvement.
- The poor condition of the all-weather pitch and badly-drained fields have a detrimental impact on learning.

Summary of key inspection judgements

Judgement	Year 9	Year 11
Standards of work seen during the inspection	Above average	Well above average
Achievement: whether the standards students reach are as high as they should be	Good	Very good
Attitudes of students to their work	Very good	Very good
Quality of teaching	Very good	Very good
Quality of learning	Very good	Very good
Quality of curriculum leadership	Very good Very good Good	
Management of the department		
Improvement since the previous inspection		

Commentary

127. Standards on entry in Year 7 are broadly average. According to the teachers' assessments, standards at the end of Year 9 have been above average for the past three years and this represents good achievement. Standards of work seen during the inspection are above average by Year 9. GCSE examination results over the past five years have been well above average, and students' performance in physical education is significantly better than in many of their other subjects. More boys than girls enter for the GCSE examination but their results are comparable. Current standards in both the GCSE course and the core physical education programme are well above average by Year 11.
128. Students in Year 10 produce quality GCSE coursework, demonstrating good organisational and presentation skills. By Year 11, their work is longer and more analytical. In curriculum physical education, pupils are increasingly able to select and combine advanced skills, as in a Year 10 trampolining lesson when girls demonstrate excellent movement skills combined into a fluent sequence at constant height. Coaching opportunities for GCSE pupils in local primary schools and the introduction of the Junior Sports Leadership Awards provide very good leadership experience, and careers guidance is good.
129. Teachers have excellent subject expertise and high expectations. Meticulous planning, including the teaching of numeracy and literacy, structures learning. Very good relationships in the lessons give students the confidence to experiment. Tasks are modified to involve all pupils actively, as in a Year 9 badminton lesson on the short service and doubles play, when differently sized hoops were used as targets for accuracy and students worked with partners of similar ability. Students with special educational needs make good progress. Students develop an understanding of fitness and health as a result of the consistent attention paid by teachers to preparation and recovery, and student-led warm-up sessions are a feature of the work. The all-weather pitch is unplayable and the fields badly drained so that, despite planned compensatory activities, the accommodation has a detrimental impact on learning.
130. In all years, students are trained to observe performance analytically and give accurate and sensitive feedback for improvement. This assessment complements that of teachers and targets are set for future learning. There is no difference in the standards of work of

pupils from different ethnic backgrounds. An innovative wall display, 'Your journey through the curriculum', charts progress year by year.

131. Leadership and management are based on a determination to ensure the highest possible standards. They are characterised by clear strategic thinking and planning, astute faculty self-evaluation and monitoring, and continuing professional development, specific to the needs of the faculty. The curriculum is broad and balanced, with very good coverage of activities.
132. An impressive programme of extra-curricular activities, courses, and visits enriches learning, as do excellent links with local sports clubs and the community. The use of ICT supports learning and very good displays stimulate students' interest in the subject and record their successes. Many students gain representative honours in a wide variety of activities and school teams are very successful in local competitions.
133. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. High standards reached then have been maintained; the school was awarded a Sportsmark accreditation as recognition of good provision in physical education and sport. There is equality of curriculum provision for all, and non-active participants are usually fully involved in the lessons.

Example of outstanding practice:

In an outstanding lesson in Year 10, boys at the beginning of the GCSE course were focusing on the anatomy and physiology of joints. Learning was based on tasks set for homework. A variety of interesting activities, including group-work in the positioning of different joints on outlines of the human body, led the students to identify types of joints accurately and to link this with their function in different sporting activities. The lesson proceeded at great pace and very good relationships gave students the confidence to experiment, to work collaboratively and to make mistakes. A wide range of audio and visual aids reinforced learning in an innovative way – a mini-skeleton, hinges and sandpaper to represent bones grating, and liquid soap to represent synovial fluid. The class was constantly challenged. Students were able to assess their own progress in an atmosphere conducive to learning.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Personal, social and health education

Personal, social and health education was sampled in Year 7 and Year 10. Citizenship is taught as a part of this programme. The lessons on topics for this subject were good quality. A very good lesson was seen with Year 10 where an interactive computer program on sex and relationships education engaged the students' interest very well. It allowed them to work at their own pace and without embarrassment. Statutory requirements are met, although there is now a need to provide careers guidance in Years 7 and 8. Overall the programme makes a good contribution to students' social development, with good materials to guide students towards helpful self-knowledge and making wise choices.

Citizenship

Provision in citizenship is **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is no formal assessment, recording and reporting of students' standards and achievement.
- Leadership and management are unsatisfactory and there is insufficient guidance for the large number of teachers involved in the course.

- Teaching is unsatisfactory.
- There are new schemes of work for this school year that meet statutory requirements.
- In a well-run pilot scheme with one class, short course GCSE citizenship is being successfully taught by the religious education department.

Summary of key inspection judgements

Judgement	Year 9	Year 11
Standards of work seen during the inspection	Insufficient evidence to judge	Insufficient evidence to judge
Achievement: whether the standards students reach are as high as they should be	Insufficient evidence to judge	Insufficient evidence to judge
Attitudes of students to their work	Satisfactory	Insufficient evidence
Quality of teaching	Unsatisfactory	Not seen
Quality of learning	Unsatisfactory	Not seen
Quality of curriculum leadership	Unsatisfactory Unsatisfactory Does not apply	
Management of the department		
Improvement since the previous inspection		

Commentary

134. Citizenship is taught as part of the school's personal, social and health education programme. Two lessons were seen with a citizenship focus and in both lessons, teaching, learning and achievement were unsatisfactory. Citizenship has not been fully established in the school and there is a need to develop work in this area. No work was available from the previous year, and very little was available from this year's work. There is insufficient evidence overall to make secure judgements about standards and achievement.
135. New schemes of work have been introduced this term. They have the potential to meet requirements but are not backed by an adequate scheme for assessing, recording and reporting on students' standards and achievement. Parents of students in Years 7 to 9 last year did not receive the report on citizenship which is now a legal requirement. Students' active participation in the school community is not systematically planned and recorded at the moment.
136. Lessons are not taught by teachers who have been fully trained to teach the subject and this is a major reason for the unsatisfactory teaching and learning seen in the two lessons. Teachers need guidance on how to teach citizenship in lively ways that encourage students to discuss, negotiate, debate and participate actively. In a lesson where students were learning about prisons, their knowledge was adequate, but their ideas concerning justice were not drawn out or developed. In another lesson, research using ICT was insufficiently structured for students to benefit from the well-conceived plans for teaching global citizenship. Management was not firm enough in these lessons.
137. This year the subject is being led and managed by two senior teachers who have not yet been able to make sufficient impact on the provision for citizenship. They are aware of requirements for citizenship including assessment, and the need for suitable training for teachers. Learning resources are unsatisfactory and links with external agencies have not been established.

138. The religious education department is running a pilot scheme where one higher attaining group in Year 11 is following the GCSE short course for citizenship. This will be linked with their short course in religious education to give students an additional full GCSE. From the work in students' files, standards are above average and achievement is good.

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM

In the inspection, 10 subjects and courses were inspected and are reported on in detail. Work in other subjects and courses was sampled and contributed to the overall picture of teaching and learning in the school.

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

Level 3 GCE AS-level courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
English literature	1	100	85.9	0	19.1	40	30.2
Mathematics	1	100	61.9	100	17.1	50	22.1
Further mathematics	9	100	-	66.7	-	47.8	-
Geography	1	0	74.3	0	19.8	0	26.5
Sociology	2	100	71.8	50	18.4	45	25.4
Other social studies	1	100	69.7	0	16.7	40	24.1
Music	1	100	74.9	0	15.1	40	25.3

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
English language	32	100.0	99.4	43.8	36.3	83.8	80.9
English literature	20	100.0	99.5	40.0	46.5	87.0	86.5
Mathematics	56	100.0	96.7	67.9	55.6	98.6	88.8
Biology	61	100.0	96.4	55.7	39.2	92.8	78.6
Chemistry	40	100.0	97.6	57.5	49.0	91.5	84.9
Physics	11	100.0	96.7	63.6	44.6	96.4	81.7
Information technology VCE	14	100.0	77.9	55.6	23.4	94.8	64.9
Geography	5	100.0	98.7	60.0	44.5	92.0	84.0
History	23	100.0	99.0	26.1	44.6	77.4	84.6
Other social studies	46	100.0	97.4	37.0	42.7	84.3	81.8
Design and technology	13	100.0	96.7	67.9	55.6	98.6	88.8
Art and design	5	100.0	98.6	20.0	50.2	56.0	87.5
Drama	9	100.0	99.5	33.3	40.1	80.0	83.6
Business studies	15	100.0	98.7	6.7	36.8	62.7	80.1

Economics	9	100.0	98.9	88.9	52.0	106.7	88.3
Physical education	14	100.0	98.0	50.0	30.9	92.9	75.2

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

English

The focus of the inspection was on English literature. One AS English language lesson in Year 12 was observed. Standards were around the national average and the students made good progress because the teaching was lively and challenging.

English literature

Provision in English literature is **good**

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is good and students achieve well in lessons.
- There has been consistent improvement in A-level results over the last three years.
- Good leadership and management have encouraged the development of strong teams of teachers.
- There is too little rigour in curriculum planning to ensure that a wide range of teaching styles is used.

Summary of key inspection judgements

Standards	Well above average
Achievement	Good
Quality of teaching	Good
Quality of learning	Good
Leadership of the subject	Good
Management of the subject	Good
Progress since the last inspection	Very good

Commentary

139. Standards in English literature have improved over recent years. In 2003 the A-level results were above average. Boys did particularly well – all gained A or B grades. Results at AS-level in 2003 were well above average. This group of students went on to attain standards which were better than the previous year. All students gained a pass grade.

140. Overall achievement is good. Standards in the present Year 13 are above average. Predictions for Year 12 are better. Many more girls than boys take the subject. Most students, especially boys, express their ideas confidently and are keen to participate in discussion or to make presentations to the class. Students in Year 13 worked very hard in pairs on Congreve's presentation of women in *The Way of the World* and made very good progress as a result. Students learn to look closely at text and increasingly support their ideas using quotation. They explore character and language and compare and make connections with other texts they have read. High attaining students' writing is fluent and relatively mature.

141. Overall teaching and learning are good but not uniformly so. In the best lessons teachers sustain interest because they present material in lively and energetic ways so that students make good progress in developing knowledge and understanding. In Year 12,

for example, students were asked to match literary terminology to quotations from their text *The Color Purple*. Students found this task challenging and enjoyable and responded very well to the rigorous pace and high expectations in the lesson. Most tasks are carefully structured and are varied and planned so that learning is sequenced. Sometimes, however, there is little variety and tasks are drawn out for too long so that the pace slows and the lesson loses its focus. Students work well independently or in pairs. Their work is accurately assessed and marking is thorough. Students know at what level they are working and what is needed to improve their work. They say that teachers are accessible if they need additional support or explanation.

142. Leadership and management are good. The course is taught in modules by three teachers who meet together informally but regularly to discuss and plan approaches and the progress of individual students. Students are given a copy of the scheme so that they know where they are in the programme. In addition to regular written assignments students are assessed each term and their work moderated by the teaching team. The course is reviewed annually. Teaching teams are carefully selected so less experienced teachers can be supported. These arrangements work well but in common with the subject lower down the school, more detailed curriculum planning alongside consideration of a wider range of teaching and learning styles would benefit sixth form work and could be achieved in part by observing others at work.

143. Standards have improved considerably since the last inspection when the A-level results were broadly average, and they are still improving. Numbers taking the subject remain broadly the same year on year although there are fewer students in the present Year 13 than usual.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

144. Standards of language and literacy are well above average in the sixth form. Students read and extract information from texts with increasing confidence and competence. They write fluently and accurately and express clearly complex ideas in class discussions. In mathematics, they can discuss and analyse difficult concepts and in drama evaluate new ideas and concepts in their writing. In French students develop well their advanced reading skills.

Modern foreign languages

The focus of the inspection was on French. German was sampled in Years 12 and 13, as well as Spanish in Year 12. German is the most popular language in the sixth form, with seven students studying at AS-level and two at A-level. The popularity of German relates in part to the links the school has with Germany as well as to the perceived needs of a major local employer. In German, teaching is good overall, leading to good learning and achievement; standards are average. Spanish is not yet fully established in the sixth form and there is only one student in Year 12. Teaching is good and the student is achieving well.

French

Provision in French is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Lessons are conducted mainly in French, in part by native speakers of French.
- Students are able to take an active part in serious discussions in French.
- Work experience in France is provided for all students in Year 12.
- Numbers are too small for students to learn to their best advantage.

Summary of key inspection judgements

Standards	Above average
Achievement	Good
Quality of teaching	Good
Quality of learning	Good
Leadership of the subject	Good
Management of the subject	Good
Progress since the last inspection	Satisfactory

Commentary

145. Only one student is taking French in Year 13, from the four who attained mid-range grades at AS-level in 2004. In the current Year 12 there are two students, both with higher grades in the GCSE examinations. In 2003, the two students both obtained a grade, one of them at a high level. In 2002 and in 2004 there was only one student in each year. Both obtained a pass, the latter in 2004 at the higher level.
146. Although the inspection was early in the academic year, students in Year 12 had progressed well since GCSE. Both had prepared a French language presentation on marriage and divorce and were able to take part in a role-play discussion, taking opposing views. This was being further developed in one-to-one discussion with the French *assistante*. Consolidation of basic grammar was being undertaken in the adjacent room with the class teacher. These two students are set to benefit like their predecessors from work experience in Avignon. This is a major input into students' learning.
147. Achievement in Year 13 is good and standards are above average. The student deals confidently with issues relating to racism and inequalities in society which contribute well to her moral, social and cultural development. This is also true of the work seen in Year 12 where students are developing sophisticated literacy skills both in reading comprehension and summary writing.
148. Teaching, whilst good overall, is very good in Year 13. Although opportunities for group and collaborative work cannot be easily achieved, the isolation of the single student is turned from a potential weakness into a strength through strong teacher encouragement of independent learning. The school is determined to try to retain its language provision in the sixth form whilst recognising that it is not cost effective. Overall leadership and management are good and progress since the last inspection has been satisfactory, with the capacity for making further improvement.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The A-level results in 2003 were well above the national average.

- Achievement is consistently very good.
- Excellent leadership is already improving the very good teaching and learning.
- Students have very good attitudes to mathematics.
- The curriculum is extensive and caters for a wide range of abilities.
- Teaching and learning are affected by the limited range of resources available to students and teachers.

Summary of key inspection judgements

Standards	Well above average
Achievement	Very good
Quality of teaching	Very good
Quality of learning	Very good
Leadership	Excellent
Management	Very good
Progress since the last inspection	Good

Commentary

149. In 2003, the A-level examination results were well above the national average. This matched the performance in 2002, and in 2004 the results were equally impressive. The most able students almost always attain the top grade, and usually do so in the further mathematics A-level course. Students of all abilities achieve very well in examinations from their GCSE performance. Male and female students achieve equally well. Recruitment is impressive, particularly of female students, and the department does well to retain a high proportion of students through to the end of Year 13.

150. Currently, students in Year 13 are achieving very well whether they are gifted, from a minority ethnic background or have special educational needs. The most able students are all on course for the top grade and at least half for a top grade in the further mathematics course. They are confident with techniques and also show initiative in finding methods for more difficult problems. Students are achieving very well in all aspects of mathematics because they have been taught very well throughout their course and have developed a strong work ethic from the very beginning.

151. Current students in Year 12 are achieving as well as their predecessors. The very able in Year 12 are only five weeks into their course, yet have an excellent grasp of early concepts in decision mathematics. They know how to make choices about doing an overall job that involves tasks that might or might not depend upon previous tasks. Many students who did not attain the highest grades in GCSE follow a course focused on statistics. Already they have developed very good skills in analysing how well two types of data such as the price and age of a car relate to each other. They are making very good progress in articulating their conclusions. The number of students studying mechanics as part of their course is increasing significantly. They, like all students in Year 12, have rapidly settled into the mode of hard work and independent study that is necessary for success at this level.

152. Teaching is very good. It is often excellent and no lessons were seen that were not at least good. Learning is very good because teachers have very good subject knowledge and involve individual students in working at a level that will challenge them. Lessons have very good pace. Teachers assess very accurately when to move forward, and students work very hard, often thriving on the challenge teachers set. Only when there is a little too much

note-taking and teachers talk for too long is the learning less than very good because a minority of students relax. Whilst teachers are successful in maintaining the overall very good progress of students, there is a lack of resources other than textbooks, worksheets and past papers to stimulate students to learn even more.

153. The new head of department has shown excellent leadership in her very short time at the school. She is an excellent teacher and has a vision for all students enjoying mathematics and being stimulated to learn as best they can. The department is exceptionally inclusive and provides courses in all aspects of mathematics for a wide range of abilities. She has already introduced the use of *PowerPoint* into lessons and the use of this and the follow-up notes stimulated excellent work. Management has been very effective so far and the few areas for improvement such as more meaningful target-setting and widening the use of resources have been rightly identified. Improvement has been good since the last inspection.

Mathematics across the curriculum

154. Students are very competent in mathematics when they use it in other subjects. In design and technology, they measure very accurately in work on textiles and in science they are adept at dealing with chemical equations. Data-handling skills are well above average. Students use these effectively in science, geography and ICT. In art and design, there is less evidence than might be expected of a clear focus on work in shape and space. Whilst there is a policy for mathematics across the curriculum and there has been training for teachers in all subject areas, this was two years ago. In some subjects, such as English and modern foreign languages, there is little evidence of any opportunities to develop mathematics at all. There is currently no monitoring of the use of mathematics across the curriculum and the new head of mathematics has rightly identified this as an area to refocus on.

SCIENCE

The focus of the inspection was on chemistry, and biology and physics were sampled. Results in all sciences are above average, with a large number of students achieving A and B grades. Provision for physics and biology are both good. A high proportion of students proceed to science-related studies in higher education.

Chemistry

Provision in chemistry is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Well-qualified and experienced teachers develop students' knowledge and skills well.
- The A-level examination results are good and many students achieve high grades.
- The course meets the need of students well as it has very good resource materials for use in school and for private learning.
- The recruitment of students has fallen but is now increasing.
- The length of lessons is too short for some of the practical exercises.
- Links with industry and scientific organisations are insufficiently developed.
- There is not enough staff development activity related to improving teaching and learning.

Summary of key inspection judgements

Standards	Above average
Achievement	Good
Quality of teaching	Good
Quality of learning	Good
Leadership of the subject	Satisfactory
Management of the subject	Satisfactory
Progress since the last inspection	Satisfactory

Commentary

155. In 2003, standards in chemistry in examinations were above the national averages and slightly exceeded expectations based on students' overall GCSE grades. The results for 2004 are similar. There has been a gradual increase in standards in the past three years. There are no significant differences between standards reached by boys and girls or students from minority ethnic groups.

156. The achievement of students is good. They make very good use of the support materials provided by the Salters course and supplement this with additional material from teachers. Students co-operate well during practical work and in discussions and work hard. Individual investigation exercises are well planned and show understanding of a wide range of applied topics and practical techniques, such as extracting caffeine by thin layer chromatography, testing polluted water, and electrochemistry. Homework is set regularly and marked in detail so that all students have good feedback on their progress.

157. Learning is good as there is considerable discussion during lessons to clarify understanding, often of difficult abstract concepts such as bonding in organic molecules. All of the chemistry teachers have very good subject knowledge and devise lessons that extend thinking and help students to draw on previous knowledge and principles. Teachers use techniques to keep all students engaged and involved such as individual whiteboards for quick answers to questions. Students are frequently asked to explain answers to questions to the whole class, as in a lesson on the structure of carboxylic acids. This increases their confidence and engagement in learning. At present, there is little use of ICT to stimulate learning within lessons and in data logging but students make good use of the facilities in the college computer suites for coursework and projects. All

teachers provide additional help and support outside lessons as required. Overall teaching and learning in chemistry are good.

158. The leadership of the subject is satisfactory. Schemes of work and resources are well organised but the subject does not have an action plan for improvement or a handbook. Staff development is not linked closely enough to the demands of sixth form teaching, and requires systematic planning. While there have been some good links with industry in the past, these need to be re-established and extended, as do links with scientific institutions. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory as standards have been maintained.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good teaching ensures high standards.
- Students' attitudes are very positive and help extend their learning.
- Very good leadership and management ensure students achieve very well.

Summary of key inspection judgements

Standards	Well above average
Achievement	Excellent
Quality of teaching	Very good
Quality of learning	Very good
Quality of curriculum leadership	Very good
Management of the department	Very good
Progress since the last inspection	Very good

Commentary

159. Examination results in 2003 were well above average. The provisional results for 2004 indicate a further improvement, with a higher proportion of students gaining the highest grades. The students taking these examinations had received little ICT teaching in earlier years, so this represents excellent achievement. Standards of current work are well above average. Students demonstrate a high level of competence when showing how ICT helps businesses function well. They explain fully how to create a wide range of documents. They record and effectively interrogate personal and financial data. Students in Year 12 use spreadsheets to create efficient data capture forms. They use a computer language to write procedures for inserting action buttons to control the spreadsheet. Students improve their presentation and communication skills by persuasively discussing their projects with consultants. A group of students in Year 13 use some very advanced software to construct frames in a video presentation.

160. The quality of teaching and learning is very good. Teachers use their very good command of the subject to plan detailed lessons which extend students' learning. Very good use of ICT and stimulating teaching styles engage students. Teachers provide good opportunities for students to work independently and their response is very positive. As a result, students become very engrossed in their work and produce good quality work. Teachers have high standards and demand a high level of commitment from the students. Their positive individual support helps students to explore issues and to use the wide

range of available resources. This assistance also provides for the differing needs of the students so that all achieve well above expectations. Challenging tasks are set to stretch the higher attaining students to extend themselves further. There is no significant difference between the achievement of boys and girls although more boys follow the courses. Students write coherently and extend their communication skills through discussions on their projects with consultants. They improve their numeracy skills through spreadsheet activities which analyse a range of data.

161. The leadership and management of the ICT department are very good. Dedicated leadership inspires all teachers and students to strive for the best results. There are well-defined structures to ensure that students' learning is always developing. The management of the department is very good and the very committed team of specialist teachers creates a positive environment for learning. Students respond very well and show a high level of independent work. Regular and practical self-evaluation keeps the department on the right tracks. The infectious enthusiasm of the head of department is rewarded by well above average results. The range of professional software allows students to produce high quality documents and presentations.

162. Since the last inspection the very good improvement in resources and the caring leadership and management have contributed well to the improvements in standards. Improvement since the last inspection has been very good.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

163. The provision for ICT across the curriculum is satisfactory. There are very good resources which students use effectively for research and to enhance the quality of the presentation of work. A number of teachers use ICT well to enhance the delivery of lesson topics. In some subjects, students extend their knowledge and understanding through ICT activities. However, further development is restricted by a lack of equipment around the school. There is no policy for the mapping and monitoring of how other subjects deliver their contribution to ICT. There is a clear vision of what the school has to do to extend this aspect of students' learning, which needs to be implemented to improve further the present good standards of achievement.

HUMANITIES

The focus of the inspection was on history. Geography and religious education were sampled. In geography, two well-taught lessons were seen in Year 13. Students are achieving well and are reaching standards in line with course expectations. In religious education, two lessons were seen in Year 13 in which teaching and learning were both very good. Most students complete their studies and achieve very well. Standards are above course expectations. There is no general religious education course for students not following the AS or A2 courses, and in this respect the school is in breach of statutory requirements.

History

Provision in history is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The current lack of staffing means that students in both Years 12 and 13 do not receive their full curriculum entitlement because some of their scheduled classes cannot be covered by staff.
- Results in examinations have been below the national average but the standard of students' current work is above average.
- Leadership and management are good overall.
- Students work well in class but do not read sufficiently widely around the subject.

Summary of key inspection judgements

Standards	Above average
Achievement	Satisfactory
Quality of teaching	Good
Quality of learning	Good
Leadership of the subject	Very Good
Management of the subject	Good
Progress since the last inspection	Satisfactory

Commentary

164. The head of department is teaching all of the current provision in the sixth form, due to the lack of staffing, brought about by absences through illness. Despite her tremendous efforts, this means that some students in both Years 12 and 13 are not receiving their full entitlement because some of their scheduled classes cannot be covered by specialist staff. The situation is exacerbated by relatively large numbers of students in lessons, which places a major burden in terms of marking and evaluation of students' work on a single teacher. This is unsatisfactory.
165. Standards in the A-level examinations have been below the national figures for the last two years. At AS-level, results have improved and were just below national figures in 2004. However, students' attainment in work, in both AS and A-level courses of study, is above course expectations. In both years, students, with increasing maturity, display good analytical skills. In Year 12, students develop their analytical skills well, particularly those dealing with historical arguments. For example, in their studies of Britain in the 1930s, students are able to support effectively arguments as to whether the 1930s were a period of affluence or depression.
166. Students in Year 13 discuss historical issues from different perspectives and develop historical concepts and understanding involving the need for judgements based on evidence. For example, in their studies of the Suez crisis of 1956, students accurately evaluate arguments for and against the assertion that the crisis was a turning point in British post-war attitudes towards imperialism.
167. Achievement is satisfactory overall although in classes and in their overall work, students' achievement is good. In terms of results in public examinations in both years, students' attainment is only average. Progress for all but the higher attaining students is affected adversely by the lack of skills for dealing with the complexities of examination questions. Moreover, a significant minority of students have not yet developed a culture of wide reading, save for the sources supplied to them in class.

168. Teaching is good overall and is occasionally very good. Presentations, based on very good knowledge, are skilful, confident and accurate and they often inspire and enthuse students, which leads to good learning. The teacher's enthusiasm for the subject is conveyed well to the students who respond well. When the teaching is relatively weaker, it is because of the heavy reliance on scripted texts produced by the teacher, which do not encourage independent learning and wider reading. Learning reflects teaching and is good overall. Students are very appreciative of the hard work done for them. However, some students are happy to be passive recipients rather than active participants in learning.

169. Leadership and management are good overall. Leadership is very good. The head of department has a clear vision for the development of the subject in the sixth form, and is fully committed to raising standards. The long-term absences of her colleagues mean that she has taken all of the teaching of the sixth form classes on her shoulders. Prepared documentation for the general running of the department is a strength and the overall management of the subject is good. The head of department is a good role model of commitment to both high standards and the students' best interests. The subject has made satisfactory progress since the last inspection.

ENGINEERING, TECHNOLOGY AND MANUFACTURING

Design and technology

The focus of the inspection was on product design – textiles. Lessons were sampled in food technology, systems and control and three-dimensional design. In all lessons teaching was very good with standards ranging from average to very high. The number of students in each of the groups was small and therefore national comparisons are unreliable. All students display commitment and very positive attitudes.

Product design – textiles

Provision in product design – textiles is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- Students have very positive attitudes and a considerable commitment to work, which results in very good achievement.
- Very good teaching leads to very high standards of work.
- The creativity and originality of students help to produce well above average examination results.
- The lack of specialist accommodation means that students lose time for practical work and this has an impact on standards.

Summary of key inspection judgements

Standards	Well above average
Achievement	Very good
Quality of teaching	Very good
Quality of learning	Very good
Leadership of the subject	Very good
Management of the subject	Very good
Progress since the last inspection	Good

Commentary

170. The overall level of attainment of students on entry to the course is average. Students are not required to have studied the subject at GCSE. During Year 12 students make very good gains in their knowledge and understanding of materials and design and market influences. The standard of work produced by students completing the A-level course is very high. Students have confidence in their ability to realise their designs. They learn more advanced sewing techniques, which enables them to adapt patterns as well as create new designs. Good use is made of the computer-aided design facilities and the computer-aided manufacturing equipment, which are regarded by students as integral to their learning. Students have good economic awareness and understand the implications of producing garments commercially. They build on their prior knowledge, making very good use of the teachers' expertise available to them. There is a high level of maturity and independence. They willingly respond to the challenges of the increased complexities of the design and make processes. The very good progress made by all students is a reflection of the high degree of enthusiasm and commitment they have for the subject. Relationships between students and staff are very good and these, coupled with very positive attitudes, help students to achieve very well. Results in A-level examinations in 2003 and 2004 have been well above average
171. Teaching is very good. Teachers command their students' respect because they have very good subject knowledge. They have a very good understanding of the course specification and provide expert guidance to students during lessons. Teachers have very high expectations that are almost always realised. Students recognise and value highly the effort made by teachers to ensure that they achieve their potential or, as in most cases, exceed it. Learning in lessons was at least good and mostly very good. The difficulty of gaining access to specialist accommodation adds pressure on teachers who have to move resources to non-specialist areas. This restricts students' access to ICT and sewing machines. Students lose time for practical work because specialist rooms are not available.
172. The curriculum meets the needs and aspirations of students very well. Staff are constantly reviewing aspects of the course, making modifications and improving resources. There is a well-established assessment system that enables teachers to monitor progress and provide advice to students on how to improve.
173. Overall leadership is very good. Under the direction of the head of design and technology, the head of subject shows energy and vision. The passion with which she leads and manages the subject is reflected in the students' desire to succeed. This is a cohesive and highly effective small team. Management is very good, compensating for inadequate accommodation and minimising the impact that the accommodation has on standards. Improvement since the last inspection has been good.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

The focus of the inspection was on art and design and drama. Media studies and music were sampled. Media studies is a new course, running for the first time this year in response to student demand. Thirteen students in Year 12 are taking the course, including ten boys. Teaching and learning were good in the lesson observed. In music, teaching is very good and students achieve very well and reach above average standards.

Art and design

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Experienced staff support students across a wide range of media.
- Very good individual tuition guides students to plan their work effectively.
- Standards of work are improving and are now above average.
- Facilities for ICT within the department are inadequate.
- There is insufficient analysis of examination results to aid departmental planning.

Summary of key inspection judgements

Standards	Above average
Achievement	Satisfactory
Quality of teaching	Good
Quality of learning	Good
Leadership of the subject	Good
Management of the subject	Satisfactory
Progress since the last inspection	Satisfactory

Commentary

174. Standards attained in sixth form examinations in art and design have been inconsistent over recent years. The department was slow to adapt to changes arising from the introduction of AS and A2 examinations, which led to a dramatic fall in results from well above the national average to well below the national average. In 2003 the AS examination results were average but A-level results were still well below the national average. The 2004 results suggest a return to above average standards, with two-thirds of students gaining the highest grades of A or B in Year 13. This reflects the above average standards seen in Years 12 and 13 during the inspection. Standards on entry to Year 12 are average overall across a wide range of ability. At the end of Year 12 a significant group of lower attainers do not continue with the subject into Year 13. As a result standards on entry to Year 13 are above average. Achievement for these students is satisfactory. Students continue to show strengths in drawing and painting from observation, with very good control of colour and tone. Higher attainers make inventive use of materials, and work on display includes outstanding examples of mixed media collage from the previous year. Good quality research into artists' work is presented well in sketchbooks and contributes to students' own work, although the range of artists studied is rather narrow. Students use ICT effectively for research and basic image manipulation but facilities are inadequate to teach or promote its use as a creative tool.

175. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Entry to the A-level course is not restricted and both year groups contain a relatively wide ability range. One-to-one tuition is very supportive and well targeted to meet the needs of individual students. Teachers question students' intentions effectively, guiding them towards making decisions and pursuing further lines of exploration. Good demonstrations of techniques for individuals and groups show the teachers' strong knowledge of the subject and are well timed to break up the longer double lessons. Vagueness about time limits, on some stages of projects, results in a loss of urgency and energy in students' working. Teachers give good feedback to students, keeping them well informed of their progress.
176. Leadership and management of art and design are good overall. Leadership is good. The head of department has established a department that supports students of all backgrounds and abilities and enables talented students to flourish. The experienced teachers form a well-established and effective team, with a broad range of skills to support the growing individuality of their students. Management is satisfactory. Changes, including rewriting project plans and delegation of staff responsibilities, are beginning to prove effective in improving results at A-level. Insufficient analysis of examination data contributed to the slow response to poor AS-level results and remains inadequate to monitor the effectiveness of recent changes. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory.

Drama

Provision in drama is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are now above average and this is an improvement.
- Teaching is very good and helps students to develop their dramatic skills well.
- Higher attaining students achieve well.
- Students have very positive attitudes to their studies and are fully committed to it.

Summary of key inspection judgements

Standards	Above average
Achievement	Good
Quality of teaching	Very good
Quality of learning	Very good
Leadership of the subject	Very good
Management of the subject	Very good
Progress since the last inspection	Good

Commentary

177. There has been a recent improvement in standards. The current Year 12 is a much larger group than in previous years with more male students opting for the course. The AS examination results in 2004 were well above the average grades achieved the previous year, with all students attaining the higher grades of A, B or C. Higher attaining students did very well in examinations. At A-level standards have been in line with the national average in 2003 and 2004 with a very small entry. The present Year 13 students are achieving above the national average. The profile of the entry level of students of drama in the sixth form is broadly average and most achieve well.

178. The quality of teaching is very good. Well-produced resource materials help students to see the historical and cultural perspectives of the subject. They, therefore, have a good basis on which to consider and develop their critical appreciation of drama. Most argue cogently about what makes good theatre. They recognise and interpret the actions of stock-characters from the plays of Sheridan, for example. Teachers have secure subject knowledge and students are prepared to experiment with different forms and genres. Students are encouraged to rehearse their ideas for a given audience as they attempt to produce ideas on some difficult themes, such as exile and repatriation. Most can move easily from text to confident performance.
179. There are very good relationships and the work produced, both practical and written, shows a high level of commitment and pride in presentation. The good co-operation that occurs in lessons means that students of average ability are greatly encouraged by others who have creative flair. In practical work, they show a keen eye for physical detail such as gesture and movement on stage. They achieve well because the teacher allows them gradually to take on more responsibility for their own planning. Students are able to study a range of demanding topics and themes, such as cannibalism, and they respond in a mature and thoughtful way.
180. Leadership and management are very good. There has been a detailed analysis of the strengths and shortcomings of past students' work and focused teaching has helped to rectify the weaker areas. There has been a continuance of the good work seen in the last inspection.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

Physical education

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve very well and have a good range of skills, and their writing demonstrates a sophisticated understanding.
- Teaching is very good, expectations are high and there is a range of challenging tasks and activities in lessons.
- A wide range of curricular and enrichment opportunities enhances learning.
- The poor state of some outdoor facilities hinders learning.

Summary of key inspection judgements

Standards	Well above average
Achievement	Very good
Quality of teaching	Very good
Quality of learning	Very good
Leadership of the subject	Very good
Management of the subject	Very good
Progress made since the last inspection	Good

Commentary

181. Standards achieved at A-level in 2002 and 2003 were well above the national averages. In both years, all students achieved a pass grade, with half of these at the highest levels. More students entered in 2004 and the percentage achieving the highest grades was above the school's average. This represents very good achievement.
182. Standards in the AS examinations were well above the national average in 2002 and 2003 and two-fifths of the entry in both years gained the highest grades. In 2004, numbers increased, most reached their predicted grades, and some improved on them. This represents very good achievement. Results in the AS and A-level examinations are consistently above the average of other subjects studied in the sixth form.
183. Standards of work seen are currently above average. By Year 13, students have developed their techniques in the analysis and evaluation of what constitutes skilled performance well. Higher order practical skills are improved further, although the poor state of the outdoor pitches has a negative impact on learning in some sports. Female students in Year 12 and Year 13 are able to demonstrate techniques in hockey and netball with consistent precision, accuracy and flair. Activities are of increasing challenge and students show a clear understanding of the application of physical factors which underpin performance. Higher attaining students work at an appropriately challenging level because teachers have good knowledge and records of their achievements in and outside school and effective liaison with their specialist coaches. Students with special educational needs make good progress because the faculty identifies subject-specific difficulties and, with the special needs department, plans staged responses, occasionally resulting in one-to-one support. Wall displays in the sports hall include the successes at the paralympics and the school has forged useful links with local physically handicapped and able-bodied clubs. Students are encouraged to respect all and to value sporting behaviour.
184. Most students have a highly responsible attitude towards their work and participate fully in the excellent provision of enrichment activities. However, a small number of students in Year 13 need to be challenged by their teachers before they are fully motivated.
185. Learning benefits from knowledgeable and stimulating teaching. In a lesson on the psychology of sport, the teacher's excellent subject knowledge, ICT skills, energy and enthusiasm helped to encourage the group to analyse and challenge prevailing theories and to develop their own ICT skills.
186. Leadership and management, which are very good, are focused on raising standards. Performance data is thoroughly analysed and strategies for improvement formulated and implemented. Excellent links are forged with other schools and institutions, sporting clubs and businesses.
187. Improvement in provision since the last inspection has been good. The high standards reported then have been maintained. Students gain sporting and representative honours in a variety of activities. More students are participating in examination courses.

BUSINESS STUDIES AND ECONOMICS

188. Business studies and economics were sampled. Standards of work in business studies are in line with course expectations. Teachers have a good command of the subject and make lessons interesting. Students work well in class but do not demonstrate evidence of

wider reading around the subject. One economics lesson in Year 13 was observed. Students were responsive and standards were around the national average. Teaching was good and supported learning effectively.

PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT AND GENERAL PROGRAMMES

Personal, social and health education

189. There is a good quality compulsory programme for students in Years 12 and 13. It is taught weekly by tutors and covers a good range of topics. Students appreciate the advice they receive about their academic progress, preparation for higher education, sex and relationships education and personal finance. In addition, there are sessions that encourage students to look outwards at ethical and community issues, such as immigration and racism, and offer preparation for life in a culturally diverse society. In lessons students were informed about entry for key skills accreditation in communications, and general studies examinations. This effectively illustrated the range and usefulness of the course for students' personal development.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgement</i>	<i>Sixth form grade</i>	<i>School grade</i>
The overall effectiveness of the sixth form and the school	2	3
How inclusive the school is		3
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	3	3
Cost effectiveness of the sixth form / value for money provided by the school	3	3
Overall standards achieved		3
Students' achievement	3	3
Students' attitudes, values and other personal qualities (ethos)		2
Attendance	1	2
Attitudes	2	2
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	2	3
Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development		3
The quality of education provided by the school		3
The quality of teaching	2	3
How well students learn	2	3
The quality of assessment	2	3
How well the curriculum meets students' needs	3	3
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities		2
Accommodation and resources	3	6
Students' care, welfare, health and safety		3
Support, advice and guidance for students	1	3
How well the school seeks and acts on students' views	3	4
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents		4
The quality of the school's links with the community	3	3
The school's links with other schools and colleges	3	3
The leadership and management of the school		2
The governance of the school	2	2
The leadership of the principal		2
The leadership of other key staff	2	2
The effectiveness of management	2	2

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