

INSPECTION REPORT

**RIPLEY ST THOMAS CHURCH OF ENGLAND HIGH
SCHOOL**

Lancaster

LEA area: Lancashire

Unique reference number: 119796

Headteacher: Mr J Lailey

Lead inspector: Mr T Wheatley

Dates of inspection: 7th – 11th March 2005

Inspection number: 268894

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:	Voluntary Aided
Age range of pupils:	11 – 18
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	1577
School address:	Ashton Road Lancaster Lancashire
Postcode:	LA1 4RS
Telephone number:	01524 64496
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Professor J Crewdson
Date of previous inspection:	15 th March 1999

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Ripley St Thomas Church of England High School is a voluntary aided school with 1,577 pupils and students, 300 of whom are in the sixth form. There are significantly more girls than boys in the school. Pupils and students are from predominantly white United Kingdom backgrounds and there are very small numbers of pupils and students from Indian, African, Chinese and mixed race backgrounds. No pupils or students have English as an additional language and none are in the early stages of English language acquisition. A very small number of pupils come from Travellers' families. The percentage of pupils who have special educational needs is below the national average and the percentage with statements of special educational needs is also below the national average. There are small numbers of pupils with dyslexia, physical, speech and visual disabilities, moderate learning problems, autism and social and emotional difficulties. The socio-economic backgrounds of pupils are above average, though the school takes pupils from a full range of backgrounds. The percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals is well below the national average.

Attainment on entry to the school is above average and has been rising over recent years. The local primary schools from which the school draws its intake also send pupils to two very large local grammar schools.

Between 55 and 60 per cent of students stay on into the sixth form. Small numbers go to other sixth forms locally and about 50 students from other schools join the sixth form. Students from other schools tend to be of lower attainment than those staying on in the school. Overall, attainment on entry to the sixth form is average.

The school is a specialist languages college. Its partnership establishments are Garstang High School, St Martin's College, Lancaster and a large number of primary schools. The school has Artsmark (2002), Investors in People (2002), Sportsmark (2002) and Schools Curriculum Award (2003).

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
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19720	Deborah Granville Hastings	Lay inspector	
3758	Anthony Barringer	Team inspector	English English literature
2919	Phillip Armitage	Team inspector	Mathematics
27503	Marie Foulds	Team inspector	Science Biology
15940	Norman Godfrey	Team inspector	Art and design
7084	Jack Haslam	Team inspector	Design and technology
12118	Allan Paver	Team inspector	Geography
10275	John Cosgrove	Team inspector	History
22906	Barry Hodgson	Team inspector	Information and communication technology
18447	Ron Cohen	Team inspector	Business studies
3793	John Ratcliffe	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages German
2626	Marion Thompson	Team inspector	French
1340	David Wigley	Team inspector	Music Citizenship
22042	John Challands	Team inspector	Physical education Leisure and recreation Special educational needs
2893	John Manning	Team inspector	Drama, theatre studies

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REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT	7
PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE MAIN INSPECTION FINDINGS	
STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS	11
Standards achieved in subjects and courses	
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities (ethos)	
QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL	15
Teaching and learning	
The curriculum	
Care, guidance and support	
Partnership with parents, other schools and the community	
LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT	24
OTHER SPECIFIED FEATURES	26
WORK-RELATED LEARNING	
PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES	28
SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 AND 4	
SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM	
PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS	62

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

This is a very good school with some excellent features. Pupils and students achieve very well overall as a result of very good teaching. The headteacher provides excellent leadership and the school's ethos for learning is outstanding. The school has a very good understanding of its own strengths and areas for improvement. The school provides very good value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Pupils achieve very well in most subjects and sustain high levels of performance.
- The headteacher provides excellent direction for the school and has an exceptionally clear vision of the improvements needed.
- Teachers' subject expertise is very good and leads to very challenging lessons.
- Spiritual development is excellent and leads to the exceptional Christian ethos seen in all aspects of the school's work.
- The school's work as a specialist language college is good and in particular has made a significant contribution to the very good cultural development of pupils and students.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning and to the very wide range of activities offered by the school are very good.
- Governors are very well informed about the school and make a significant contribution to its development.
- Provision for information and communication technology (ICT) in Years 7 to 11 is unsatisfactory but good improvement plans are in place.
- Improvements in accommodation have been good but some accommodation is still unsatisfactory.

The school has made good improvement since it was last inspected in March 1999. Teaching styles have improved considerably and the quality of teaching and learning is better than it was at the last inspection. Strategic and short term-planning have improved as a result of the experience gained from its language college status and the school now meets its statutory obligations for annual reports to parents about pupils' progress and for conducting risk assessments. Very high standards of attainment have been maintained.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

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

In 2004, results in the end of Year 9 National Curriculum tests were well above the national average. They were well above the average of similar schools in English and mathematics and above average in science. The school exceeded its challenging targets. Results have improved in recent years. Inspection evidence matches these results overall. Standards are well above average in English, mathematics and science. They are well above average in design and technology, geography and history and they are above average in all other subjects except ICT where they are average. Achievement is very good overall and very good in English, mathematics, design and technology, geography and German. Achievement is good in science and all other subjects except ICT where it is satisfactory. In the GCSE examinations in 2004 results were well above the national average and well above the average of similar schools. The school exceeded its targets overall and

has sustained its results at this high level over recent years. Inspection evidence provides a similar picture of well above average standards overall and very good achievement. Standards are well above average in English, mathematics, science, art and design, design and technology, geography, history, business studies, French and Spanish. They are above average elsewhere except for German and ICT where they are average. Pupils with special educational needs make very good progress throughout the school.

In the sixth form, results in A-level examinations in 2004 were well above average overall and students achieved well. Results were disappointingly low in French, but the reasons have been identified and action taken in current AS and A2 groups. Inspection evidence shows that standards are rising and are now well above average overall. Achievement is very good overall. It is satisfactory in German and improving. Effective changes to raise standards have not had long enough to take effect.

Pupils' personal development is very good, moral, social and cultural development is very good and spiritual development is excellent. Pupils are very responsible, have very positive attitudes to learning and show a strong sense of the Christian values the school demonstrates in all aspects of school life. Pupils enjoy being in school and many take advantage of the very wide range of activities offered. Attendance and punctuality are very good.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education is very good. Teaching and learning are very good throughout the school. Teachers have very good subject knowledge, plan lessons very well and have very high expectations of pupils. They know pupils well through good assessment procedures and provide effective guidance to help them improve. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is good and frequently very good. Classroom assistants work effectively with pupils.

The curriculum is good overall, though provision for ICT is unsatisfactory; there is not enough time for the subject in Years 7 to 9, and the range of courses offered is too narrow in Years 10 and 11. There is a good range of work-related and vocational courses and pupils have very good access to the courses that best suit them. The contribution of the specialist language college is good, with a wide range of languages and cultural experiences available to pupils and students. The range of extra-curricular activities is very good. Staffing is very good, the availability of support staff is good and resources are satisfactory. Accommodation is unsatisfactory, though the school has made significant improvements since the previous inspection.

The school provides very good support for pupils' personal and academic development. Pupils' involvement in school life is very good. Management of day-to-day care, welfare and health and safety issues is good. The very good links with other schools and with the community support and enhance pupils' learning and personal development well. Links with parents are good overall and parents are kept well informed about the progress their children make.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are very good. The leadership of the headteacher is excellent and his vision for the school is outstanding. The leadership of other key staff is good. Governance is very good and governors are knowledgeable and highly committed to the school. Management is very good and financial management is good.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents' views of the school are very positive and they are very pleased with the standard and quality of education. They feel the school sets high Christian standards. Pupils' views of the school are very positive. They feel they are supported and guided well and that the school listens to their concerns and acts on them.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

The most important things the school needs to do are:

- Improve provision for ICT in Years 7 to 11 in accordance with plans.
- Work with the local authority to improve the school's accommodation.
-

SIXTH FORM AT RIPLEY ST THOMAS CHURCH OF ENGLAND HIGH SCHOOL

OVERALL EVALUATION

The sixth form is very effective. It provides a very wide curriculum. Teaching and learning are very good and students achieve very well. Leadership is very effective and the sixth form provides very good value for money.

The main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Students achieve very well overall and sustain high levels of performance throughout Years 12 and 13.
- The very good teaching and learning is valued by students and contributes significantly to their high achievement.
- The attitudes of students are very good and make a significant contribution to how well they achieve.
- Access to computers is unsatisfactory and does not effectively support students' positive attitudes to independent learning.
- The curriculum is very well organised to provide a very wide range of academic and vocational courses.

QUALITY AND STANDARDS IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES OF THE CURRICULUM

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

Curriculum area	Evaluation
English, languages and communication	<p>English. Provision is very good. Results in both courses were above the national average. Standards are currently well above average and students achieve very well. Teaching is very good and students' attitudes are very positive. The subject is very well led and managed.</p> <p>French. Provision is satisfactory. Standards are below average in Year 13, above average in Year 12 and are improving. Students' achievement is satisfactory and their attitudes are positive. Teaching is satisfactory.</p> <p>German. Provision is satisfactory. Standards are below average but rising and achievement is satisfactory and also improving. Good teaching is leading to improvements and students' attitudes are positive.</p>
Mathematics	<p>Mathematics. Provision is very good. Standards are well above average and students achieve very well. Teaching and learning are very good and the subject is very well led and managed.</p>
Science	<p>Biology. Provision is satisfactory. Standards are broadly average, matching examination results. Teaching is satisfactory overall and students' achievement is satisfactory. Students have positive attitudes to their learning.</p>
Information and communication technology	The course was sampled.

Humanities	History. Provision is good. Students achieve well overall. Teaching is good and students learn well, though the use of discussion is underdeveloped. Teachers train students well in examination techniques.
Engineering, technology and manufacturing	Design and technology. Provision is excellent. Standards are exceptionally high and students' achievement is excellent. Teaching is very good and occasionally excellent. Students' attitudes are very good.
Visual and performing arts and media	Art and design. Provision is very good. Standards are well above average and achievement is very good because of very good teaching and the positive attitude of students. Theatre studies. Provision is very good. Standards are well above average and students achieve very well. Teaching is very good and inspires students. The subject is very well led and managed. Media studies. Provision is good. Standards are above average and students achieve well. Teaching and learning are good and the subject is well led and managed.
Hospitality, sports, leisure and travel	Leisure and recreation. Provision is good. Standards are above average. Students make good progress and the quality of teaching and learning is good.
Business	Business studies. Provision is very good. Both the vocational and non-vocational courses are very well taught and standards in most courses are well above average. Students achieve very well.
Health and social care	The course was sampled.

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

Advice, guidance and support for students are very good overall. The school provides very good support for students' personal and academic development. Teachers monitor students' performance closely and provide careful direction and advice that students appreciate and respect. Induction into the sixth form is very well organised and guidance for higher education is very well structured with very good advice and guidance on future choices. Students' involvement in school life is very good. They participate readily in the wide range of sporting, social and cultural activities available.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE SIXTH FORM

The sixth form is very well led and managed. The head of the sixth form leads and manages a large team of tutors very well. They work very closely together as a result, in a consistent way to support and guide students. The head of sixth form works closely with the senior management of the school and other staff to ensure students are very well catered for. She has a very good understanding of students' needs. The accommodation is unsatisfactory overall and while resources are generally satisfactory, the quantity of and access to computers are unsatisfactory.

STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Students are very pleased with the sixth form. They feel that the school meets their needs well and gives them opportunities to develop as young adults. They value the high quality of teaching, support and guidance they receive and the strongly Christian ethos of the school. They appreciate the wide range of extra-curricular activities available but would like improved access to computers.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in subjects and courses

Standards obtained by pupils and students are **well above** average overall and the achievement of pupils and students, whatever their gender, ethnicity or prior attainment is **very good**. Pupils with special educational needs achieve very well.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils and students achieve very well and sustain high levels of performance.
- Lack of time for ICT in Years 7 to 9 limits achievement to satisfactory.

Commentary

1. Pupils come to the school from 50 primary schools. Many pupils go from the primary schools to two local single sex grammar schools. Nevertheless, attainment on entry is above the national average and has been rising over recent years. Attainment on entry to the sixth form is broadly average and includes a significant small proportion of students from other schools with lower attainment than those staying on in the school. Forty per cent of pupils leave the school at the end of Year 11 and go to local further education and a very small number go on to the local grammar schools.
2. In the national tests taken by pupils in Year 9 in 2004, results were well above the national average overall and well above average in English, mathematics and science. Pupils achieved very well overall taking into account their prior attainment. Compared with schools with pupils of similar prior attainment, results were well above average in English and mathematics and above average in science. Results have been improving in recent years and exceeded the school's targets.
3. Inspection evidence indicates that standards reached by pupils in Year 9 are well above average overall and that pupils achieve very well. In particular, achievement is very good because pupils reach high standards and maintain them. Standards are well above average in design and technology, geography, history and music. They are above average in art and design, citizenship, physical education, French, German and drama and they are average in ICT. Pupils achieve very well in design and technology and in modern foreign languages overall. They achieve well in science, art and design, citizenship, geography, history, music, physical education and drama. Achievement is satisfactory overall in ICT and good in the elements covered in depth.
4. In the GCSE examinations in 2004 results were well above the national average overall and have been maintained at that level over recent years. Compared with schools where pupils' prior attainment was similar, results were well above average. The school exceeded its targets for five or more A*-C grades, for five or more A*-G grades and for one or more A*-G grade passes at GCSE. Results are consistently good in almost all subjects and very good in food technology. In design and technology overall, results have been consistently among the best in the school. Results in modern languages have fluctuated slightly due to staffing disruptions but were above average. ICT results in the General National Vocational Qualification (GNVQ) were above average.
5. By Year 11 standards seen are well above average overall and pupils' achievement is very good. They are above average in English, mathematics and science. In English and mathematics achievement is very good and in science it is good. In art and design, design and technology, music, French, Spanish and business studies, standards are well above average.

Pupils achieve very well in art and design, design and technology, Spanish and business studies and well in music. Standards in citizenship, physical education, drama and the GNVQ ICT course are above average. Standards are average in German and average in cross-curricular ICT. Achievement is good in citizenship, GNVQ ICT, French, German, drama and music and satisfactory in physical education. It is satisfactory in cross-curricular ICT. Overall, pupils' achievement is very good because pupils sustain the high and frequently very high standards they reach as a result of very good attitudes to work and very good teaching that expects high standards.

6. Standards of literacy are above average overall. The overall standard of speaking and listening is above the national expectation; pupils listen attentively in all subjects and respond articulately and with confidence. The general level of reading comprehension is above that found nationally. Written work is, on the whole, carefully presented.
7. Standards in numeracy across the school are average overall. In design and technology, numeracy is used heavily, particularly with computer-aided design and computer-aided manufacture work. The lack of a whole-school numeracy coordinator has allowed standards in many subjects to fall slightly.
8. The achievement of pupils with special educational needs is very good. Many of the pupils with special educational needs experience difficulties with literacy skills, and a significant number have specific or moderate learning difficulties. The majority of these pupils tend to perform below the level of other pupils in their year group and their difficulties also affect their ability to progress in other areas of the curriculum. However, support from teaching assistants is very effective and teaching staff are aware of their needs. They work extremely hard to ensure that appropriate strategies and resources are utilised; achievement overall for these pupils is very good. The pupils who have statements of special educational needs also make very good progress. An appropriate mixture of support is available in lessons and individually from teaching assistants. Some effective support for pupils withdrawn from lessons and a very good appreciation of their problems from most teaching staff are also critical factors in their progress.

Standards in national tests at the end of Year 9 – average point scores in 2004

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	37.2 (36.0)	n/a (33.4)
mathematics	39.2 (39.4)	n/a (35.4)
science	35.6 (36.9)	n/a (33.6)

There were 256 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

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

	School results	National results
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-C grades	79 (80)	52 (52)
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	99 (99)	89 (88)
Percentage of pupils gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	99 (100)	96 (96)
Average point score per pupil (best eight subjects)	44.2 (42.9)	34.9 (34.7)

There were 254 pupils in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

Sixth form

9. In the sixth form, results in A2 examinations in 2004 were above average overall and students achieved well. Results were disappointingly low in French, but the reasons have been identified and action taken in current AS and A2 groups. Standards are rising in the sixth form and are now well above average overall. Achievement is very good overall. In the focus subjects achievement is excellent in design and technology and very good in English, mathematics, art and design, theatre studies and business studies. It is good in history and media studies and satisfactory in biology and French overall. It is unsatisfactory in French in Year 13 though good and improving in Year 12 because effective changes to raise standards have not had long enough to take effect.

Standards in GCE A/AS level and VCE examinations at the end of Year 13 in 2004

	School results	National results
Percentage of entries gaining A-E grades	91.8 (91.9)	92.3 (92.3)
Percentage of entries gaining A-B grades	33.3 (30.7)	36.2 (35.6)
Average point score per pupil	300.6 (304.2)	265.2 (258.2)

There were 119 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities (ethos)

Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are **very good**. Their personal development and spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are **very good**. Attendance and punctuality are **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The Christian values of this school clearly permeate all its activities.
- The arrangements for the spiritual development of its pupils are excellent.
- Attitudes to learning, behaviour and attendance are all consistently very good.
- The school is a caring community with very good relationships and a deep sense of social responsibility.
- Pupils and students benefit greatly from the school's specialist language college status.

Commentary

10. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour in lessons, around school and while participating in the very wide range of activities provided by the school are very good. Pupils show outstanding levels of respect and consideration for each other, adults and those less fortunate than themselves. This is instantly apparent in the way in which pupils help others who are physically disadvantaged negotiate their way around the school. The spiritual ethos of the school is excellent, firmly based on Christian principles and has a very positive impact on attitudes and behaviour. This spiritual dimension is to be found not just in excellent acts of worship in the chapel, but through the curriculum as a whole, and through the very good pastoral care system and the tutorial periods. The search for purpose and meaning in life, and in death, was particularly apparent when the school responded to the sad loss of one of its own Christian family. The school's policies for equal opportunities and against bullying are very effective but overarching them, in the mission statement, there is an implicit acceptance of each person as a unique individual worthy of respect and dignity. Similarly, appreciation of the beauty of the world and our stewardship of the environment are taken to be spiritual as well as social issues. The spiritual dimension is enhanced by the Christian Union, the staff worship group and by special days dedicated to spirituality.
11. Pupils with special educational needs have a very positive attitude to lessons. They are confident they will succeed because they have good and effective support and because both

learning support staff and teaching staff are generally aware of and sensitive to pupils' specific needs. Pupils have very good relationships with other pupils and with members of staff.

12. Pupils readily take on responsibilities. The school provides very good opportunities for pupils to grow into able, mature, caring adults with the capability to be responsible citizens. The school gives very good moral guidance through its pastoral system and pupils respond very well to what is expected of them. Various subjects, for example geography and science, help pupils to explore moral issues. The school successfully develops talents of body, mind and spirit by an impressive range of opportunities, extra-curricular activities and residential stays, as well as sporting, dramatic and musical successes. Social and moral concern is expressed in a large number of ways and particularly in a huge amount of charitable giving and in Fair Trade support for producers in the Third World. Pupils' respect for the feelings, values and beliefs of others is excellent.
13. The social development of the pupils is very good. The school is a caring community in which there are opportunities to make informed and responsible decisions, for example through the school council and its links to house councils and individual tutor groups. The school is working on ways of improving opportunities to involve pupils in decision making. The pastoral care system, based on houses rather than years, is a very positive way of doing this. Pupils learn about society from subjects, from work-related learning, and from guidance for their personal, social and vocational opportunities in Europe and the wider world. They are provided with a wide range of opportunities to help them acquire social knowledge, skills and confidence and to take on responsibilities. The specialist language status of the school gives very good opportunities to learn about European and international societies. The very wide range of extra-curricular activities aids social and cultural development.
14. The school provides many very good opportunities for pupils to enter the wider world with knowledge of other cultures and respect for other traditions. The school effectively promotes knowledge and understanding of multicultural society through a multicultural day, the study of many languages, trips, exchanges, and visits to France, Germany, Spain, USA, Holland and India. An Artsmark award has been gained for high quality work in the creative and performing arts and technology is prominent in the design and technology courses.
15. Attendance is very good because the school, parents and pupils have a strong unity of purpose based on moral values. Punctuality is good overall, notwithstanding the lateness of some buses and the difficulties posed by the need to get to some lessons on a large site with narrow corridors. The rate of exclusions of pupils is very low and is a testimony to the high standards of behaviour, discipline and attainment that go hand in hand and which parents value highly. Bullying happens very rarely but is dealt with very effectively by pupils and the staff. The school has effective monitoring procedures for pupils' attendance. The attendance rate in 2003/2004 was well above the national average and the rate of unauthorised absence was well below the national average.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	5.9	School data	0
National data	6.9	National data	1.1

The table gives the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year.

Exclusions

Ethnic background of pupils

Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	1,495	14	2
White – Irish	4	0	0
White – any other White background	25	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	4	0	0
Mixed – White and Black African	3	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	4	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	5	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Indian	6	0	0
Black or Black British – African	5	0	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	1	0	0
Chinese	2	0	0
Any other ethnic group	6	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	14	0	0

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

Sixth form

16. Students provide very good role models for pupils in the main school. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good, as are their attitudes and conduct in such areas as the Christian Union. Students contribute significantly to the life of the school by undertaking a wide range of responsibilities. They work hard at raising funds for many charitable causes. Their willingness to give up their time for the benefit of others gives them valuable opportunities to develop their sense of social responsibility as well as being of great benefit to younger pupils, primary schools and elderly people in the community. Language college status has given students many opportunities to take a leading role in activities, in assisting with projects in primary schools and working abroad. There are opportunities for international work experience and shared-project activities with many overseas partners at sixth form level. These include collaborative projects with sixth form students in Germany, Belgium, Spain, Cyprus, Italy, Bulgaria and Romania. Students are very happy to be at the school. They benefit from all the sporting, recreational, residential, creative and performance-based extra-curricular activities and from the good collaboration with higher education providers. These latter also promote effective student progression to the next stage of their education.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

Teaching and learning are **very good**. The curriculum is **good** in the main school and **very good** in the sixth form. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is **very good**. The school provides **very good** guidance and support for pupils and students and has **good** procedures for care, welfare, health and safety. Links with the community and other schools and colleges are **very good** and with parents are **good**.

Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are **very good** and assessment is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is very good and is a key factor in pupils' very good achievement.
- Teaching and learning are very good in geography, mathematics, history, design and technology and English
- Pupils work industriously and have very good attitudes which promote their learning.
- There is not enough use of ICT in subjects across the curriculum.
- Pupils have a clear understanding of how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve.

Commentary

17. The quality of teaching and learning is very good throughout school and promotes very good achievement. It is slightly better in Years 10 and 11 than in Years 7 to 9. This is because teachers are extremely skilled at preparing pupils well for GCSE examinations. Very little teaching is unsatisfactory and the percentage of very good or excellent teaching has increased significantly since the previous inspection. Teaching and learning are very good in geography, mathematics, history, design and technology and English. In all other subject areas teaching is good, apart from physical education, where it is satisfactory in Years 10 and 11. The areas for improvement in physical education are assessment and the match of work to the range of pupils' needs within the class.
18. Teachers engage pupils' interest because they are enthusiastic experts in their subjects and convey this to their classes. Lessons are well planned with clear purposes which are made explicit. This enables pupils themselves to judge how much progress they have made, and to identify difficulties. Very good relationships between teachers and pupils and very good attitudes to work mean that lessons are productive and pupils work industriously. Lessons have pace and challenge and as a consequence pupils make rapid progress. Teachers' expositions are clear and their questioning is designed to ensure that pupils refine and improve the quality of their responses. However, not enough use is made of ICT to enhance learning. In history, lessons are sometimes too teacher directed and pupils have insufficient opportunities to learn from each other.
19. The very best lessons in geography, English, art and design and mathematics present a high level of intellectual challenge to pupils, enabling them to refine their thinking to a very high level. In a Year 7 lesson on defining the criteria for a 'site' in geography, pupils' achievement was excellent. The teacher explicitly emphasised that the way to learn was through independent thinking. Exacting questioning ensured that all pupils tried hard to refine their ideas. Pupils worked independently and confidently.
20. Assessment systems are good overall. They are very good in design and technology, English, modern foreign languages and some aspects of mathematics. In these subjects assessment is very successful in helping pupils to improve their achievement. It is satisfactory in physical education because National Curriculum levels attributed to pupils at the end of Year 9 are too high and ongoing assessment in lessons is not used well.
21. Pupils' expectations are raised by personal targets which are challenging but achievable. Underachievement is identified quickly and effective action is taken to ensure pupils catch up. Pupils have a good understanding of National Curriculum levels and GCSE/GNVQ criteria. They actively use this knowledge to improve the quality of their work and their examination performance.

22. Teachers provide good feedback in lessons which helps pupils to focus on the main areas for improvement. They use assessment information well to inform lesson planning. Marking is thorough and constructive and provides good quality guidance, resulting in improved performance. In some subjects, for example art and French, self-assessment and peer assessment are good and encourage a reflective, self-critical approach to work. The assessment of cross-curricular ICT is unsatisfactory in Years 8 and 9.
23. The teaching of literacy is good overall. Staff have been involved in in-service training and receive regular advice in faculties and departments about innovation. The level of implementation of the school policy varies somewhat but the quality of practice overall is good. Least effective is the assistance provided for pupils in structuring their work and sustaining more extended writing. Marking of pupils' work is generally consistent and informative.
24. Teaching of numeracy is satisfactory overall. It is good in science, where teachers use graph work regularly to interrogate experimental findings as well as working with mathematical formulae to carry out calculations. Art teachers use numeracy well when considering areas and volumes.
25. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is good in most subjects and frequently very good. The flexible setting arrangements in many subjects have been an important factor in the good progress made by pupils. Pupils' needs are well known by teaching staff and a wide range of teaching activities and resources is used. In a Year 9 mathematics lesson, for example, pupils with special educational needs made very good progress because of the wide range of activities and resources that was used, the very effective use of teaching assistants, and the good knowledge by the teacher of the specific needs of individual pupils. Arrangements for assessing, recording and reporting the progress of pupils with special educational needs are very good and fully meet statutory requirements. Detailed individual education plans are used effectively by the great majority of staff to set subject-specific targets. Consequently, the achievement of pupils is very good. Procedures for identifying pupils are very thorough. Teaching assistants work very well with teaching staff to ensure that pupils make very good progress. However, in a few lessons where there is no support, progress of pupils with special educational needs is slower, though not unsatisfactory. Support for those pupils whose basic literacy skills are below the national average is provided through occasional withdrawal from tutor period where they receive effective help with their particular learning difficulties from teaching assistants and sixth form students.

Sixth form

26. Teaching and learning are very good in the sixth form overall. Teaching is very good in theatre studies, art, mathematics, English, science and business studies. It is good in all other subjects, except physical education and French and Spanish where it is satisfactory. In the two languages, this is because the quality of teaching is too inconsistent. Some teaching is very good, but other lessons offer insufficient challenge. There has been a good improvement in the quality of teaching and learning since the previous inspection. Students are very well prepared for AS and A-level examinations. They have mature and serious attitudes to their work, which enhance and promote their learning. Teaching and learning in the sixth form share the same considerable strengths as are present in the main school.
27. Assessment is good overall and very good in English, mathematics, design and technology and modern foreign languages. Students have a good knowledge of public examination criteria, which they use effectively to inform their work. Challenging targets ensure that students have realistically high expectations and their progress towards them is carefully monitored. Marking and feedback in lessons are informative and regular and are effective in helping students to improve their work.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 209 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
12 (6%)	84 (40%)	79 (38%)	28 (13%)	4 (2%)	0	0

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

The curriculum

The curriculum is **good**. The opportunities for enrichment are **very good**. The accommodation is unsatisfactory and resources are satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The curriculum offers very good access to education and equality of opportunity to all pupils.
- There is a very good range of subjects and choices.
- Provision for pupils with special educational needs and for pupils' personal, social and health education is very good.
- Opportunities for enrichment are very good and participation in extra-curricular sport is outstanding.
- Provision for the language college is good.
- Provision for ICT is unsatisfactory.

Commentary

28. Equality of access and opportunity for all pupils is very good because the school exploits its large size to offer a very wide choice of subjects. All subjects of the National Curriculum and religious education are present between Years 7 and 9 along with drama, agriculture and horticulture and two languages. Some pupils study a third language after school. This imposes a time constraint, so consequently religious education is not offered extra teaching time, as the school lives out its mission in other ways. Programmes for personal, social and health education are taught as a series of full-day events rather than taking up weekly lesson time. Citizenship is identified effectively and taught across subjects of the curriculum. However, there is insufficient time to teach the programmes of study of the National Curriculum in ICT between Years 7 and 9. The school offers 25 minutes per week less than the 25 hours recommended as best practice by the Department for Education and Skills in Years 10 and 11 for teaching and learning in the classroom. However, the additional time given to daily acts of corporate worship makes a very significant contribution to the spiritual and moral development of the pupils.
29. The school has made satisfactory progress in addressing the issue of too large class sizes seen at the last inspection. While there are still some large classes, there have also been reductions in size. The problem persists in some areas due to accommodation limitations.
30. In Years 10 and 11 pupils are offered an extended core of subjects with two option choices and basic ICT. However, provision for compulsory ICT is unsatisfactory because it is taught in Year 11 only and at a level which lacks challenge for most pupils. The school offers a very wide choice of subjects in Years 10 and 11 so that pupils can make choices and at a good range of levels and certification to meet individual needs. High numbers of pupils choose to take two languages at GCSE and almost all pupils take at least one language.
31. The vocational curriculum is wide, and the school is very aware of the need to continue to develop pupils' work-related skills and business awareness. The school provides vocational courses for a significant number of pupils within a very wide range for 14 to 19 year olds. These include business studies, travel and tourism, leisure and tourism, leisure and recreation

and health and social care, which are school based. A small number of pupils take part in extended work experience placements and some also have the opportunity to qualify in agricultural and horticultural operations. The courses are very popular and a large number of pupils and students take part. The courses are all accredited at level 2 or level 3. Pupils say they enjoy the courses and they respond very well to the opportunities and challenges.

32. The curriculum for pupils with special educational needs is very good. Support from teaching assistants is very good for pupils with special educational needs. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 who have difficulty accessing some areas of the main curriculum have some opportunities to participate in a vocational and basic skills course where they achieve recognised national vocational qualifications. A flexible approach to planning individual pupils' timetables in Years 10 and 11 ensures that time is well spent developing skills knowledge and understanding in critical areas of the curriculum.
33. Provision for literacy across the curriculum is good and much effort has gone into the dissemination of good practice. Apart from the English department, design and technology provides the best support for literacy. A working group of teachers supports the main thrust and links with faculties and departments. The standard of speaking and listening is a real strength of the school but a few subject areas do not make the most of this great advantage. Numeracy across the school is satisfactory. The very strong beginning made two years ago has been dissipated. There is currently no numeracy coordinator, so departments lack common guidance. In some departments such as mathematics itself, science, art and design and technology it plays a significant role. Elsewhere, the teaching of numeracy is not as well coordinated.
34. Careers education is good and starts in Years 7 to 9 as part of the personal, social and health education (PSHE) programme. There is a good level of planning and organisation and good use of resource materials for teaching. In Years 10 and 11 and the sixth form the programme includes individual interviews through the Connexions service. Pupils are very happy with the support they receive. They are guided well both about progression to post-16 courses and about future careers. Guidance is much more intensive from Year 9 onwards, so that all pupils follow a structured programme. In addition, each pupil is provided with very helpful individual advice and support matched to his or her needs. The teacher responsible provides a very good level of coordination and management. Very good use is made of local employers to support the programme through presentations and discussions.
35. Support for learning outside of the school day is very good. Participation in sport is excellent. All pupils participate in extra-curricular games in Years 7 and 9 with an outstanding 70 per cent taking part in house or inter-school sport in Years 10 and 11. Participation in the arts is good overall, being satisfactory in music, good in art and very good in drama. Participation in extra-curricular activity is very good.
36. Staffing overall is very good. All subjects and disciplines are very well covered. The match of support staff to the demands of the curriculum is good. There is no technician support for art and the support for food studies is barely satisfactory. Learning support staff are good but too few in number. The school is fortunate in having one person who is RNIB trained in the use of braille.
37. Resources for learning are satisfactory. Since the last inspection there have been vast improvements to the library and the work carried out by the librarian has been highly effective. The resources have been completely reorganised, access has been improved, and old books have been removed and replaced by new stock. Now described as the learning resource centre, it nevertheless remains unsatisfactory and despite improved resources, the range and number of books are still too limited for the size of the school. There are too few computers to support independent learning adequately. ICT resources in departments are generally good; there has been much investment in sets of laptops. However, wireless reception for these is

unreliable in some parts of the school, notably in the history and business studies departments.

38. Resources are good in English, science, geography, physical education and for pupils with special needs. They are also good in design and technology, where there has been much improvement. Provision is satisfactory in art, although the tables are unsatisfactory and the kiln is decommissioned. It is also satisfactory in modern foreign languages, but the ICT resources are outdated. Provision in music remains unsatisfactory. The pitched and unpitched instruments are in a poor state of repair and a lack of computers has a negative effect on teaching and learning.
39. Overall, the accommodation is unsatisfactory as it was at the last inspection, but there have been some improvements. Senior staff and governors have prioritised and developed areas to good effect. The design and technology block has been totally upgraded and contributes much to the very good achievement of pupils and students. English, geography, history and business studies have new buildings that are stimulating learning environments. The accommodation for physical education is unsatisfactory but all shortcomings will be addressed once the new sports hall is built. In science, two of the laboratories have been refurbished and are good but there are insufficient rooms, so some lessons are taught in small non-specialist rooms which are shabby and uninspiring.
40. Accommodation for music is unsatisfactory, as it was at the previous inspection. There are no practice rooms and teaching rooms are very cramped and uninspiring. Accommodation for ICT is unsatisfactory and depresses the standards achieved; rooms are far too small and cluttered and there is no space for pupils to put their work. The farm is a very good resource but the teaching rooms are unsatisfactory; again, they are very small and of poor quality with leaking roofs, ineffective heating and poor quality furniture. The library, although managed well, is too small to provide an effective learning resource for a school of this size.
41. Generally, the school manages the restrictions of the accommodation well. Teaching groups have been arranged to minimise the effect of the small classrooms. The orderly and calm movement around school means that congestion is handled well. However, the stairs up to and down from the tower are very narrow and steep and constitute a safety hazard.

Sixth form

42. The curriculum is very good. There is a very good range of subjects offered at AS and A2 in 2004. This includes French, German and Spanish to both levels. Religious education is offered at AS and A2 but religious education for all students is not offered in the sixth form and this is a weakness of provision overall. Vocational courses are offered in business studies, health and social care, leisure and recreation, and travel and tourism and provide alternative certification. All of these courses have high numbers of students and the business studies group is large. Group sizes at AS are variable but all are viable and some are very large. Apart from French at AS, numbers taking languages are low. However, early indications are that numbers choosing foreign languages for September 2005 are significantly larger than current numbers. Retention to A2 is good overall but varies because of the school's good policy of encouraging students to stay on in the sixth form if they wish. At A2 numbers vary from two in music to 27 in media studies. The governors monitor results, set sizes and overall curriculum provision through their half-termly contacts with all departments. This information is collated and evaluated by their knowledgeable and pro-active curriculum committee.
43. There is a strong languages experience available for students. Russian and Spanish are offered at GCSE and there are survival courses in Greek, Italian and Spanish, taught after school hours. The international ethos of the sixth form curriculum is strong and expanding. There is a wide and increasing provision for residential experience in Greek Cyprus, Italy and in Paris, where 12 students are formally contracted for a period of work experience.

44. Learning resources in the sixth form are satisfactory, overall. Improvements in design and technology have led to very good provision in this area, where there is now an exceptional range of modern manufacturing systems. The new media course is well resourced, and in theatre studies a good collection of props is being established. Provision is good in English, German, mathematics, and biology, and also in art, where students have a dedicated room, together with their own resources. French is satisfactorily resourced but there is a shortage of reading books. Most departments have good access to ICT and many, notably art, biology and media, have good collections of reference books.
45. The accommodation for the sixth form is unsatisfactory. Although sixth form students have a separate block, the rooms in that block are again very small and many double up as tutor rooms, teaching rooms and study rooms. The social area is very limited which limits students' independence. A sixth form library has been established but its resources are not yet satisfactory. There are too few books and insufficient computers to support independent study.

Care, guidance and support

The school provides **very good** support for pupils' personal and academic development. Pupils' involvement in school life is **very good**. Management of day-to-day care, welfare and health and safety across the school is **good**.

In the sixth form, the school provides **very good** support for students' personal and academic development. Students' involvement in school life is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good relationships result in pupils and sixth form students having confidence and trust in their teachers.
- Very good support for pupils' and students' personal development ensures that everyone gets the best out of their time in school.
- Teachers know the needs of their pupils and students very well and are flexible in their approach to helping them.
- The use of tutorial time throughout the school is very good and creates a purposeful start to the day.
- Sixth form students feel they get very good advice to help them make the right choice of courses.

Commentary

46. The school is an exceptionally caring place where pupils feel safe, comfortable and valued. The 'Ripley family' is a genuine community that provides support and love for pupils, staff and parents. Parents are very appreciative of the commitment of the school to its pupils and see this as a major strength and success. The pastoral system is very effective and staff work together closely and have a very good understanding of pupils' individual circumstances and needs. Because of this, pupils have trust and confidence in their teachers and find them approachable and responsive. Throughout the school, the very good relationships result in teachers and pupils interacting very well so there is a relaxed yet purposeful and stimulating atmosphere. Achievements in all walks of life are recognised and rewarded and pupils genuinely acknowledge and enjoy each other's successes.
47. There are very good strategies to support learning which contribute directly to the very good achievement made by most pupils. Good tracking and monitoring highlight those pupils who need extra help. All pupils have a review each year to look at their progress towards their targets and the half-termly grade cards give them an ongoing picture of how well they are doing. Most pupils have a good understanding of the levels and grades they are achieving and many subjects involve pupils in assessment of their own performance. The homework club is

used by many pupils and gives extra help and support for those that need it. As GCSE examinations approach, after-school and Saturday classes are available to help pupils with revision and preparation.

48. The use of morning tutorial time is very effective, providing a time for pupils and teachers to prepare for the day ahead and to think, reflect and pray together. Often pupils lead the activities with prayers, thoughts and contributions creating a special time for themselves in a hectic day.
49. Year 7 pupils settle into secondary school quickly and easily because of the very good arrangements to help them. They are well prepared during Years 5 and 6 and have many opportunities to visit and be involved in activities in the school. Despite coming from many different primary schools, young pupils very quickly become absorbed into the school family and their pride and loyalty are evident. They spend the whole of their first day in school with their tutors and are soon involved in house activities after school and at weekends
50. Pupils are involved well in school life through active participation in the assemblies, tutorials, house activities, charity work and house councils. They feel that their views matter and that teachers listen to them. Some Year 11 pupils have been working with and supporting Year 7 tutor groups and this is an area that the school wants to develop.
51. The school pays good attention to the physical care and well-being of its pupils. Child protection procedures work effectively and the school works well with outside agencies. Pupils are supervised well and sickness and accidents are handled equally well. The school makes good use of its own nurse and counsellor. Management of health and safety across the school is satisfactory and the school works well within the restrictions created by its inadequate accommodation.
52. Links between departments and the learning support department are very good and ensure that most staff have a very good understanding of the specific learning needs of those pupils with special educational needs. Liaison with primary schools is very good and forms the foundation for initial assessment, which is then developed through testing pupils on entry. This provides relevant information which helps the school to make decisions about the level of support required. This is a very inclusive school and significant progress has been made to ensure that all pupils, including those with special educational needs, make good progress and have access to the whole curriculum. There is very good provision for those pupils experiencing behavioural problems in lessons and an individual learning centre is well organised with a range of resources and good support from teaching staff and teaching assistants.

Sixth form

53. Guidance for students prior to entering the sixth form is very good and students feel confident that they have selected the right courses. There is a very good and carefully thought-out personal and social education programme which provides students with very good quality advice and support relating to studying, independent learning, choices after school and admission to further and higher education. The advice on university and college courses is very good, providing many occasions to get first-hand information to help students decide on their future. Very good relationships with tutors provide strong support and friendship, helping many students to achieve their best.
54. There are many opportunities for students to play an important and active part in school life. Senior students, prefects, the Team Against Bullying and house captains all take their responsibilities seriously and willingly. Some students feel that a separate sixth form council would give them a more effective voice to influence change and improvement in areas that directly involve them.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school has **very good** links with the community and with other schools and colleges. The partnership with parents is **good** and parents are very supportive of the school.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school has a strong identity within the Diocese and serves its community very well.
- The Friends Association is very effective in involving many people in the life of the school.
- Very good links with primary schools introduce many young pupils to languages and give older and younger pupils the chance to work together.
- Very good links with colleges and universities prepare students well for life after school.
- Parents are kept well informed about the progress their children are making.
- Communication between home and school is good and parents have confidence in the school.

Commentary

55. The school has a very strong identity within the Diocese and is an active part of its local community. Many events organised by the Friends Association attract people from a wide area – and not just those connected with the school. The Heritage Open Day, Ripley fun run, horse show, bonfire party (with over 2000 guests), sports dinner, quizzes and other events are extremely well supported and do much to keep the profile of the school very high. Pupils are quick to respond in helping others and organise many fund-raising events throughout the year, raising huge amounts of money for local, national and international charities.
56. The school uses its local and wider community very well through a varied and well-planned range of trips, activities, speakers and specialists for all year groups and in most subjects. These add an important extra dimension to pupils' learning, helping them see the relevance of their studies and giving them first-hand experience. Many pupils get the opportunity to travel abroad and the school has many friendships with groups all over the world.
57. The school has established some very good links with primary schools through its language college status. Currently 12 primary schools are benefiting from weekly French lessons and many primary school pupils attend after-school classes in French and German. Individual departments have some interesting friendships that all ages learn from. For example, a regular activity in drama sees Year 7 pupils talking to Year 1 pupils, writing a story that the younger pupils will relate to and then performing it for them. The school hosts an annual chapel service for Year 5 pupils from the church schools, when over 400 pupils join together. There are also Internet links with schools in Japan and Mexico which give pupils and students an insight into cultures very different from their own.
58. Parents are kept well informed about their children's progress. The half-termly grade cards give parents a good snapshot of progress through the year and the full written reports contain detailed and personal comments. Targets are frequently specific and practical, which helps pupils and parents understand how improvement can be made. Good quality newsletters and brochures keep parents up to date with activities, events and developments, so the school's vision and philosophy are clearly understood and appreciated.
59. Communication between home and school is good and parents are comfortable in approaching teachers with questions or problems. Teachers are quick to contact parents personally to explain problems and how they intend to deal with them. Senior teachers are very accessible and parents are confident in their knowledge of their children. The school consults parents and plans to increase the frequency with which it does this. For example, on a parents' evening, parents were surveyed for their views on homework but this does not happen frequently enough. Parents are extremely supportive of the school and all it stands for. They are very happy with the experience they and their children have.

Sixth form

60. There are very good links with the community and with colleges and universities which extend and develop students' learning and personal experiences. Through the Community Action Group and Millennium Volunteers, many students take an active role in helping others outside of school. The work they do is recognised by the school and students are highly thought of. Many visitors are invited into the personal and social education programme so students gain a good understanding of the choices available to them.
61. Year 12 students are working on joint projects with schools in Germany and Belgium where they share ideas and approaches on a common theme. Through the Comenius and Leonardo projects, students have links with schools in Spain, Romania, Bulgaria, Italy and Cyprus and some students have work experience placements abroad. Students talk animatedly about their gains in confidence and independence as a result.
62. The school has very good links with colleges and universities. Many students want to take more vocational courses after Year 11 and regular, useful contact with local colleges ensures that they have good quality information to help them make the right decisions. Also the links with higher education colleges and universities are very good and provide students with a very good insight into life after school. College students have been helpful mentors for school students, giving them a realistic look at university life.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are **very good**. The leadership of the headteacher is **excellent**. The leadership of other key staff is **good**. Governance is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The exceptionally clear vision and excellent sense of purpose of the headteacher have led to sustained high standards.
- The systems of reviewing the progress of the school are very good.
- There are very good communications despite the large school site.
- Many senior staff give a clear sense of direction to their departmental teams.
- Some issues for improvement have not been acted upon quickly enough.
- Financial management is good and well incorporated into improvement plans.
- The governors are very well informed and contribute effectively to planning school improvement.

Commentary

63. The headteacher is a very visible presence around the school site and he is very aware of the needs of the staff and the pupils. This clear sense of purpose and focus on the good of pupils and students has resulted in a school with a very positive ethos in which everyone is expected to do their best. It is a very inclusive school and standards are generally very high. The other senior staff support this vision and create good role models in important aspects, such as taking lively assemblies and supporting teachers in their daily routines. Pupils and students work very hard because they are very well cared for. The morale of staff is high.
64. The school has put in place very effective systems for evaluating its own progress with a sharp critical edge and this helps them to ensure that standards remain high. The school improvement plan is detailed and provides very good direction for school improvement. Many departmental managers replicate this good system of self-review and improvement planning. They monitor the work of their teams closely, both formally and informally, and suggest relevant areas for improvement. The use of assessment data to identify areas to improve is good. As teachers become familiar with the process they use the information more systematically to influence assessment for pupils' learning. Communications between the

senior management team and staff are regular and very effective but not intrusive and the school runs smoothly because the teachers have a clear idea of what they are expected to do. The administrative staff are very good and make a major contribution to the efficient running of school business.

65. The only area where developments have been insufficiently rapid is in ensuring the effectiveness of ICT across the curriculum, despite previous recommendations to do so. There have been some improvements, but this is still a key issue for the school. Some good efforts to improve the very tight accommodation have been successful, though this remains a major challenge for the headteacher and governors.
66. The management of special educational needs is very good. There are good links with most departments, which in turn are well informed about pupils' special educational needs. Regular monitoring of individual education plans and regular meetings between the learning support coordinator and other key staff are significant factors in the very good progress made by pupils. The deployment of teaching assistants is very well organised and the range of work they undertake is developing well. They meet to plan their work, though not frequently enough, and they are increasingly involved in recording the progress of pupils. Support staff have a clear understanding of their responsibilities and planning between teaching assistants and teachers is generally good. The governing body fulfils statutory requirements and a named governor is well informed and supportive.
67. Governance is very good. The chair of governors has a secure hold on all school matters, and is introducing effective new strategies, such as giving added power to sub-committees, and delegating responsibilities to all governors. Link systems between governors and subject departments are good, leading to governors having first-hand knowledge of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Although there have not been some improvements recommended in the last inspection report, overall development planning within budget boundaries has been very carefully considered.
68. Staff performance management is good with each teacher having three set targets, one of which stems from whole-school plans. Induction of newly appointed staff is very good with detailed familiarisation sessions dealing with whole-school issues as well as the provision of very good support from within each department. Continuing professional development is very good and open to all. Non-teaching staff in the school have already benefited and used the system to gain full teacher status. The school's contribution to initial teacher training is very good. Not only does the school regularly take as many as six trainees but it is also to take a further 14 in a new scheme to show final year university students what teaching is like. Recruitment and retention of staff are very good. The school has made a strong start with the workforce remodelling scheme, with only examination invigilation and the responsibility for site and buildings yet to be considered.
69. Approaches to financial management are good and in line with the outcome of the recent audit report. The school receives and spends a very low budget compared with national averages. The governors' finance committee, with a good blend of experience and professional expertise, manages its scarce resources well and always after careful consideration. The full implementation of work-load reforms offers the opportunity to reorganise administration of the school.
70. Governors apply the principles of best value to the processes of their school very well. They are very well informed through a wide variety of means of gathering information. They have very good knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses of teaching and learning, of the curriculum and of pupils' and students' achievement. Their evaluation processes are thorough and they take effective action. The decision to build a new sports hall was taken only after balancing very prudently all the perceived needs of the school. Additional funding to support specialist college status is well spent. Additional funding for pupils with special educational needs is very well spent. The school and sixth form give very good value for money.

Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	4,730,139
Total expenditure	4,622,795
Expenditure per pupil	2,941

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	158,431
Balance carried forward to the next	265,775

Sixth form

71. The leadership and management of the sixth form are very good. Staff work closely together under effective direction and provide a high level of support, guidance and direction for students. The head of sixth form ensures that the students are a fully integrated part of the main school and that they provide good role models for other pupils. They are given encouragement to become independent thinkers and learners. Students view the school and their teachers with high regard.
72. The planning of the curriculum is very good and students receive very good guidance to choose the most appropriate courses. Form tutors have a good relationship with students and there is a maturity about their attitudes and approach to work which results in overall good performances in examinations. The school takes into account the views of students when planning future courses.

OTHER SPECIFIED FEATURES

WORK-RELATED LEARNING

Provision in work-related learning is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils have a thorough understanding of the world of work due to well-organised provision.
- Links with colleges and external agencies are effective and pupils benefit from them.
- The range of vocational courses is good in the main school and sixth form.

Commentary

73. The school has conducted a careful audit of the curriculum and all departments are proceeding to identify and embed this aspect of the curriculum into schemes of work. Provision for learning about work is good. The great majority of subjects make valuable contributions to teaching pupils about work, the particular skills they need for work and what they can learn from the world of work. Careers education is taught between Years 7 and 9 as part of the PSHE focus days. Afterwards it is taught in discrete lessons between Years 10 and 11. The school makes good use of local employers, and Connexions staff take part in assemblies and careers work. No pupil is unplaced at the end of Year 11. Pupils in Year 11 are clear about their target grades and their future destinations. Because a very high proportion of pupils go on to extended education and training, they place great faith in what they perceive as a very effective advice about sixth form in this school, in other schools and in local colleges. There is a good programme of work experience for pupils in Year 10; Connexions and Compact 2000 organise information about modern apprenticeships and about extended work placement for those few individuals who need it. Three pupils are on courses at local colleges in Years 10 and 11 but there is a good range of vocational provision and a range of certification available within the school. All pupils follow one vocational subject, ICT, but the level of challenge on the CLAIT (Computer Literacy and Information Technology)

course is too low for most pupils. Provision for business education is strong and the school is working hard to raise the level of business challenge available to all pupils.

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 AND 4

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

English

Provision in English is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils' achievement is very good and leads to very good performance in national tests at the end of Year 9 and in GCSE examinations.
- Teaching is very good, leading to behaviour and attitudes of a very high standard.
- Leadership and management are very good, resulting in very good improvement.

Commentary

74. In National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 9 in 2004, results were well above both the national average and the average for similar schools. This performance exceeded the department's forecasted grades. Boys have done marginally better than girls over the previous three years when compared with their respective national averages. Results in 2004 showed a marked improvement on those of the previous year. This year group joined the school with levels of literacy above average but, in reaching levels well above the national median at the end of Year 9, they achieved very well.
75. Examination results for the GCSE in 2004 were well above the national average in both language and literature. Boys performed marginally better than girls in language when compared with their own national average, but girls did better in literature. The percentage of pupils achieving A*-C grades was above the national average.
76. By Year 9 and Year 11 standards are well above average overall. The standard of oral work in Years 7 to 9 is well above that found nationally. Pupils listen attentively and respond articulately during whole-class discussion. They answer questions eagerly and make longer contributions if asked. One class of higher attaining pupils in Year 9, for example, discussing Ted Hughes' poem *Hawk Roosting* offered a sensitive and well-informed commentary. They justified judgements clearly through detailed reference to the text and opened up deeper levels of meaning in the poem. Pupils work effectively in pairs and small groups, listening courteously and making well-considered contributions. By the end of Year 9 almost all pupils use standard English accurately. In Years 10 and 11 they develop increasingly mature and confident powers of expression in their speaking. A group of higher attaining pupils in Year 11, for example, stimulated by very skilled and well-informed teaching, produced a thorough analysis of poems by Seamus Heaney. Their work in groups was outstanding for its maturity and perceptiveness. The quality of pupils' reading aloud varies considerably, with many communicating meaning clearly through a wide range of pitch and pace but a minority occasionally failing to project fluently and audibly.
77. The overall standard of reading in Years 7 to 9 is well above the national expectation. Time is set aside for those few pupils who encounter difficulties with reading to meet in the library for detailed assistance and encouragement. All pupils are expected to read quietly for ten minutes at the start of every English lesson. This initiative is much appreciated by pupils and effectively supports their private reading for pleasure. Lessons are regularly held in the library to encourage research as well as good reading habits. By the end of Year 9 pupils study a wide range of literature. They identify accurately elements of plot, themes and characters and comment upon writers' use of language. In Years 10 and 11 pupils develop a keen critical response in their study of a range of literature. A class of high attaining pupils in Year 10, for

example, uncovered several layers of meaning in Dickens' *Great Expectations*. Inspired by excellent teaching, pupils responded fluently and knowledgeably to questions about social conditions in Dickens' time. By Year 11 most pupils confidently use the appropriate language of literary criticism.

78. The general standard of written work in the main school is well above that found nationally. Writing is, in the main, carefully presented and pupils keep an anthology of their best work which has been conscientiously and effectively drafted. By Year 9, high attaining pupils produce assignments matching National Curriculum levels 6 and 7. Most of the best work is personal reflective writing or a response to pupils' study of literature. Such pieces are carefully planned, with good control over paragraphing, sentence structure and grammatical detail. Lower attaining pupils, although writing with enthusiasm, often make mistakes with the choice of vocabulary and expression of ideas. In Years 10 and 11 pupils' written work becomes increasingly complex and ambitious. A higher attaining class studying Golding's *Lord of the Flies*, for example, offered very thorough critical commentaries on the major themes in the novel, expressed in accurate and expressive style.
79. The quality of teaching throughout the main school is very good overall. Teachers have very strong specialist knowledge and set high academic standards. Lessons are very thoroughly planned and prepared and objectives are always clearly stated. Pupils always know exactly what is expected of them, in both their work and behaviour. As a direct result of the mutual respect shown in lessons, pupils' attitudes and behaviour are very positive. Tasks are carefully selected to match pupils' level of attainment closely. Lessons are conducted at a brisk pace and teachers use questioning robustly and skilfully to draw out thorough answers. Pupils are expected to justify their opinions through clear evidence. Marking is conscientious and consistent, giving pupils detailed guidance about ways to improve.
80. The department has a very strong ethos. All staff share the same high aspirations for pupils. Outstandingly good relationships owe much to the very high quality of teaching. The overall effectiveness of the department is largely the result of the very efficient management and powerful leadership of the head of faculty.
81. The department makes a valuable contribution to the cultural life of the school. Since the last inspection there have been significant improvements in teaching and pupils' behaviour, as well as in management and leadership.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

82. In subjects across the curriculum provision for literacy is, in the main, good. The quality of pupils' speaking and listening is very good and is higher than that expected nationally. Pupils listen attentively and respond well in class. In most subjects, group work is common, and is effectively practised. In a few departments, discussion and talk are not yet fully assimilated into lesson plans and structured talk is not yet accepted as an essential mode of learning. Pupils are not encouraged often enough to read aloud to the class.
83. Almost all pupils read well enough to understand and access printed materials given to them. In all departments care is taken to match reading levels closely to pupils' reading age. Key words are well displayed in all areas. Strategies to assist reading and retention of information are widely used. Not all departments take sufficient advantage of the very well managed library to encourage research and the extension of knowledge.
84. Written work is generally carefully presented. Although the writing of non-fiction has been given priority in staff training, good practice is not yet widely enough disseminated. Note taking is well managed, but in some departments pupils do not receive enough help with structuring their writing.

Modern foreign languages

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Achievement in French and German is good as a result of good teaching.
- Spanish is very well taught and pupils achieve very well in Years 10 and 11.
- Good leadership sets high but realistic expectations for the languages college. Very good leadership in German is focused on raising standards.
- All pupils take two languages in Years 8 and 9 and around 30 do so in Years 10 and 11.
- There is insufficient use of ICT to support learning in the main school.

Commentary

85. All pupils take French in Year 7 (and some also Spanish) and add German in Year 8. In Years 10 and 11 they must choose one language to continue to GCSE. Currently, thirty-five pupils take two languages in Year 10 and 28 do so in Year 11. The majority choose French but a substantial minority choose German and one class takes Spanish.
86. In teachers' assessments in 2003 and 2004 attainment at the end of Year 9 was well above average. GCSE results in 2004 in French and Spanish were well above average. Results in French had dipped to below average the previous year but recovered in 2004. Spanish results come from a single class of 22 pupils who had begun the language in out-of-school classes in Year 9. Results in German were below average. Comparisons with national averages are misleading since this school enters a much larger proportion of pupils than most schools.
87. Standards seen by Year 9 are above average in both French and German. Pupils achieve well in French and very well in German, considering the three hours allocated per two-week time frame for each language, with a year less in German than in French. Some individuals have achieved very well to be in a top set; other pupils with special educational needs also achieve very well to be near average standards in German. In both languages, by Year 9 pupils are already familiar with the use of verbs in the past and future tenses. Speaking throughout the school is a relative strength because teachers speak their languages continuously in lessons. Overall achievement – two languages developed to average national standards – is very good.
88. Achievement in Years 10 and 11 is good in French and German and very good in Spanish. In both French and Spanish, pupils progress to well above average standards, with those taking Spanish doing so in a much shorter time. In German, achievement is good, since pupils working to average GCSE standards match high standards of writing and demonstrate good understanding of the structure of the language. Pupils with special educational needs achieve in line with their peers.
89. Pupils' attitudes to language learning are very good, as are relationships with teachers and other class members. As a consequence, pair work is very productive, leading to very good speaking skills.
90. Teaching is good overall and consistently so in German. It is very good in Spanish and in most French lessons but in French it is less consistent. Where there are weaknesses they relate to inadequate planning, leading to a lack of challenge. Normally time is very well used, with timing devices used in lessons to put pressure on pupils. Teachers engage well with pupils, encouraging them to experience language learning as a key skill in life. Annual exchange visits with German and French schools are an important aspect of this drive. Tolerance and respect for others are key values evident in the close attention to classmates and peer evaluation.

91. The head of faculty leads the languages college well. Her leadership makes a strong impact on learning in the main school, especially through extending opportunities to learn more than one language. German as a discrete subject is very well led and managed and French is well led and managed. Within the main school there has been good improvement since the previous inspection because standards are now well above average in French and Spanish.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The achievement of pupils, by both Year 9 and Year 11, is very good.
- Teaching is very good, delivered by staff with very good subject knowledge.
- The use of ICT in support of pupils' learning is unsatisfactory.
- Problems associated with accommodation are eroding achievement in mathematics.

Commentary

92. In the National Curriculum tests taken by pupils at the end of Year 9 in 2004, the results were well above average, maintaining the high levels of performance evident in earlier years. There was no significant difference between the results of boys and girls. This cohort had a standard on entry that was well above average and this 2004 result represented good progress, as standards were maintained for three years with pupils of a wide range of ability. In the GCSE examinations of 2004, the results were well above the national average, as in previous years. Again, there was no significant difference between the results of boys and girls.
93. Standards are well above the levels expected nationally by the end of Year 9, and achievement is very good. In one lesson with higher attaining pupils, work began with introductory work on Pythagorean triads and by the end of an hour, these pupils were deftly calculating the length of a diagonal in a rhombus. Only rarely did pupils make an error of algebra or calculation. A less able class converted fractions into decimals and did so with very good application. This and similar groups are relatively small in size and this allows the teacher to provide a good degree of one-to-one attention, so promoting good progress. This is particularly effective with classes of pupils with special educational needs. The small size of the groups and the presence of capable teaching assistants enable these pupils to make good progress.
94. Standards by the end of Year 11 are well above average. The highest attaining pupils have a very good understanding of very sophisticated mathematical ideas. For example, in a lesson with very able pupils, work centred on the use of upper and lower bounds using numerical examples. Work finished with the pupils considering bounds for simple algebraic expressions, with nearly all the class getting them correct. Average and some lower attaining pupils have a good understanding of the subject. For example, a class following the intermediate tier GCSE worked on equations and their conversion to straight line graphs. However, although work proceeded well in this class, overall achievement was marred by constant low-level chatter from a small number of boys, though this is not a common feature of lessons.
95. Teaching and learning are very good for all years. Teachers all have very good subject knowledge and this is used to good effect when, for example, a teacher provides two alternative ways of solving a problem. The very best teaching is characterised by very good use of ongoing assessment, very good planning, purposeful activities driven by clear exposition and the exemplary attitudes and behaviour of pupils. Teachers often stop to check – “Do you all understand that?” The use of ICT in the department is unsatisfactory, with classes having insufficient access to computers. In the week of the inspection, only 11 classes out of a possible 176 were able to use computers, and these were all in Years 7 or 8.

Homework is set regularly and, like class work, is marked regularly and makes a strong contribution to pupils' learning. Many staff make clear to pupils at what National Curriculum level they are working. This is very good practice but is not applied consistently.

96. Leadership and management of this large department are very good. Staff work with a common purpose and to very high standards. Assessment systems are good and are used both to adjust the placing of a pupil in a particular set and to monitor the progress of sets and of individuals. The department has a good set of policy statements but has yet to come to grips with the contribution that mathematics can make to whole-school issues such as citizenship and the world of work. Accommodation for mathematics is unsatisfactory, with several part-staff having no fixed base and the use of a large but unsuitable space, which is also a dining area.
97. Since the last inspection, improvement is good. Test results at Year 9 and examination results at Year 11 remain above average. Pupils' relationships and attitudes to work remain very good. The overall proportion of lessons in which teaching and learning are good or better is now at a high of 80 per cent. The last report made no evaluation of either accommodation or ICT, both of which are now unsatisfactory.

Mathematics across the curriculum

98. Numeracy across the school is satisfactory, though it is good in mathematics. Despite very good numeracy work in past years, there is now no numeracy coordinator and the numeracy work in other departments lacks direction. The good earlier guidance has not been sustained. This has led to its use in other subject areas being variable in both quality and depth. Whilst frequent users of numeracy such as science, design and technology, geography and history plan for and deploy it satisfactorily, other departments are insufficiently committed

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve well due to good teaching and learning and very good attitudes by pupils.
- Although pupils have a good understanding of their attainment, they do not have a good understanding of how to improve.
- Accommodation is unsatisfactory, limiting the amount of practical work done. Lack of literacy skills impedes the progress of lower attaining pupils.

Commentary

99. In the National Curriculum tests, taken by pupils in Year 9 in 2004, results were well above average. Over recent years, the trend has followed that seen nationally, though results have been consistently well above national figures. Compared with pupils of similar prior attainment, results were above average. Compared with their attainment on entry to the school, pupils' achievement has been good.
100. In the GCSE examinations taken in 2004, results were well above average when compared with all schools. In recent years, results have improved. These results represent good achievement, taking into account that the attainment of pupils on entry to the school was above the national average, and that the well above average standards, achieved by Year 9, had been maintained.
101. Standards seen were well above average by Year 9. The higher attainers have an in-depth knowledge and understanding of scientific topics. They show good recall of previous work and

grasp new work quickly. Their writing is fluent and their verbal explanations are clear and confident. They make good use of their mathematical skills, especially in the study of physical processes, and analyse graphs effectively. They show competent ICT skills in scientific experimentation. The lowest attaining groups also show sound recall of previous work, but in much less detail. They carry out practical work confidently and record observations accurately, but the unsatisfactory literacy skills of some limit their performance in tests.

102. In Year 11, standards are well above average. The higher attainers, taking dual certification, have a good understanding of scientific concepts across the three disciplines. Their verbal explanations are precise and articulate and their written work is fluent. Their good skills in ICT enable them to carry out simulated experiments effectively. Pupils in middle groupings are often less precise, both verbally and in written work. The lower attainers have a sound knowledge of fundamental science, but their application is weaker, as is their use of scientific terminology. Pupils taking the single award have only a fundamental appreciation of their scientific work. Weak literacy skills depress standards and the poor attitudes of a few pupils hinder their learning.
103. Overall, pupils make good progress, building effectively on their attainment on entry to the school. Very positive attitudes and good behaviour in almost all lessons contribute significantly to their good achievement. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well because of the teachers' sensitive understanding of their requirements. Teaching methods are adjusted to match ability and where necessary, scientific apparatus and learning resources are specifically modified.
104. Teaching and learning are good overall and a significant amount is very good. Teachers have a very good command of their subject. As a result, work is challenging and information provided for pupils is detailed and rigorous. Lessons are planned well so that learning is progressive. Very good use is made of resources and the inclusion of much practical work in lessons enables pupils to learn effectively from experimentation. However, investigative skills, such as predicting and planning, are insufficiently developed in day-to-day teaching. Class management is almost always good so that pupils are kept engaged and time is used well. On some occasions, though, learning points are not sufficiently clear and not sufficiently checked, during or at the end of the lesson. Homework is set regularly and effectively extends or consolidates the work done in lessons. However, marking of this and class work rarely gives a clear indication of how to improve. High quality technical support has a positive effect on teaching and learning.
105. Formal assessment is thorough and well constructed. Targets are set, progress is monitored, and pupils have a clear understanding of the standards they are achieving. However, assessment is not being used sufficiently well to support learning.
106. Leadership and management are good. The head of faculty has a clear vision of the improvements needed and of the areas for development. He has been effective in building a positive team spirit and leads sensitively. There has been extensive curriculum development over the past two years and there is indication that it is beginning to have effect. Monitoring of the subject's performance and self-evaluation of the faculty have been very thorough but effective action, based on the findings, needs to be developed further. Although good evaluation of teaching has been carried out by senior teachers in the school, its monitoring has not yet been formalised within the department. Resources for learning are generally good but accommodation is unsatisfactory. There are too few laboratories and some teaching takes place in classrooms not suited to the teaching of science. Two laboratories are of a very high standard, but several of the others are too small and in need of refurbishment.
107. Improvement, since the last inspection, has been good. High standards have been retained in the end of Year 9 tests and GCSE results have improved. Better resources have enabled better use to be made of ICT in teaching and learning. Improved teaching styles are

encouraging pupils to take more responsibility for their own learning. Marking, as at the time of the last report, remains an area for further development.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning are good.
- Assessment in ICT lessons is good, helping pupils to improve their standards.
- Assessment of ICT in Year 8 and Year 9 in other subjects is unsatisfactory.
- Pupils have very positive attitudes and good work rates.
- The curriculum is unsatisfactory for pupils in Years 7 and 8, as there is insufficient time for them to complete work in sufficient depth.
- The curriculum for pupils in Years 10 and 11 does not meet the needs of many pupils.

Commentary

108. In the teachers' assessments at the end of Year 9 in 2004, results were well above average. However, these results referred to assessment of a small part of the ICT curriculum, not the full breadth, as required by the National Curriculum. The results of pupils taking a GNVQ course in 2004 were in line with national averages, over 90 per cent gaining a pass grade or higher in the subject.
109. Standards in Year 9 are in line with nationally expected levels. Pupils arrive in the school with satisfactory skills in using computers. They make good use of these skills to create slide shows, showing good understanding of their intended audience. In Year 8, ICT is taught well through English and mathematics. For example, in English pupils create websites using information they have researched about Shakespeare, and in mathematics they use spreadsheets to analyse data, and create charts about pupils' spending habits. In Year 9 more advanced skills are used as they begin to learn about databases. They identify different field types as well as primary keys. The control strand of ICT is not taught as part of separate ICT. Although some of this is rightly taught as part of the design and technology curriculum, it is not assessed and there is no surety that the full requirements of the National Curriculum for ICT are fully met.
110. By Year 11 standards on the GNVQ course are in line with expected levels. Pupils make use of a wider range of skills to complete projects and pupils achieve well. They use good word-processing skills in the presentation of projects. They use more complex formulae in spreadsheets, and create switch-boards and combo boxes as they design databases. They understand the need for suitable hardware and software for specific business users.
111. Overall achievement by all pupils, including those with special educational needs, is satisfactory. However, the achievement of pupils in Years 10 and 11 taking the GNVQ course is good. The CLAIT level 1 course in Year 11 has insufficient challenge for many pupils, particularly higher attainers for whom there is no course more closely matched to their capabilities.
112. Teaching in ICT lessons is good. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and understanding of examination requirements. This enables them to give clear explanations about the use of software, and what needs to be done to achieve high standards. Pupils have very good attitudes and work hard in lessons, which contributes to their good learning. Lessons are well planned and match the capabilities of pupils. Assessment in taught ICT lessons is good, as pupils are given the criteria to help them understand how well they are

doing and how to improve their standards. Assessment of ICT capability in other lessons where ICT is taught is, however, unsatisfactory.

113. Leadership is satisfactory, but management of the subject is unsatisfactory. There is a satisfactory view of how the subject can improve both in separate ICT and in other subjects. There is good planning for the introduction of new courses for pupils in Years 10 and 11, but management of the curriculum is currently unsatisfactory. There is insufficient time to complete the programmes of study in ICT in sufficient depth, with only one hour every two weeks in Year 7 and no discrete ICT lessons in Year 8. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 are limited to GNVQ as an option choice, with no course that meets the requirements of higher attaining pupils. There has been satisfactory progress since the last inspection.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

114. The use of ICT in other subjects is satisfactory. All departments have planned use of ICT in their schemes of work. There is very good use of ICT in design and technology, where there have been significant improvements since the last inspection. There is good use in English, science and geography, where effective use is made of laptop computers and other equipment such as data-loggers in science. The use of ICT in modern foreign languages and in music is unsatisfactory. Since the last inspection there has been good progress in the use of ICT across the curriculum. There has been considerable investment in the provision of technology, with the purchase of wireless laptop computers, and some interactive whiteboards. However, the ratio of computers to pupils of 1:4 is below that seen in most schools. The three dedicated ICT rooms are small, and the heavy demand on these for discrete ICT lessons further restricts pupils' access to computers; therefore they are unable to make full use of their ICT skills in other subjects.

HUMANITIES

Geography

Provision in geography is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve very well and standards seen were well above average.
- Teaching and learning are very good.
- A few higher attaining boys do not attain their target grades at GCSE.
- The very good base of assessment data is not yet used well enough to set targets for improvement.

Commentary

115. In teachers' assessments of pupils at the end of Year 9 in 2004, attainment was well above the national average with almost half gaining the higher levels. This represents good progress on above average prior attainment on entry to the school. GCSE results have been significantly well above the national average for the last three years. In 2004 this represented very good progress on well above average prior attainment because very high standards had been maintained.
116. Standards seen were well above average by Year 9. Girls achieve better than boys. Those with special educational needs, and with below average and average prior attainment achieve very well. Those of high prior attainment achieve well and are reaching the highest levels of the National Curriculum. By Year 11 standards are well above average overall. Higher attaining pupils have extremely good knowledge of what causes earthquakes and an excellent understanding of the effects on transport systems, local economy and rescue efforts. All pupils

achieve very well, except for a few higher attaining boys who do not sustain their concentration. Teachers work hard to attract higher attaining girls to the GCSE course.

117. Teaching and learning are very good overall and occasionally excellent. Most lessons are strongly directed by teachers and at a fast pace. Teachers have demanding expectations of work and behaviour. In response, the very good attitudes and behaviour of pupils contribute strongly to the very good teaching and learning; pupils have high expectations of their teachers. Courses are very well organised to promote the requirements of the National Curriculum and the GCSE syllabus. Teachers' questioning is very good and expects detailed answers. The use of geographical evidence and relevant case studies is strongly reinforced. Teachers are starting to make good use of recently introduced laptop computers and interactive whiteboards. Teachers brief classroom assistants effectively to set demanding expectations of pupils with special needs, who then achieve very well. Good display celebrates pupils' achievement. Marking is thorough; comments are terse, but encourage and show pupils how to improve; verbal feedback supports this. Pupils know their target grades and how to reach them. A very good database is being developed which targets achievement in specific geographical skills. These are identified precisely in subject reports. The department has detailed assessment information about the performance of pupils, classes and teachers but is not using it well enough to set strategic targets for improvement.
118. Leadership is very good, dynamic, and very demanding of the strong team of teachers. Staff have a determination and very good capacity to raise performance further. Management is good. Development planning is in line with that of the school and targets are accurate. The monitoring of teaching and learning is securely in place. Accommodation is very good and resources for learning are good. The department makes a strong contribution to the school's international ethos. Teachers are very good role models who contribute well to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils. Improvement since the last inspection has been good because standards have risen, right up to GCSE.

Imaginative and skilful teaching in a Year 9 lesson for a small class of pupils with special educational needs promoted excellent learning and progress. The lesson was about birth and death rates and the growth of population.

All seven pupils had individual needs and some were very demanding. Three had statements and two were on school action-plus. Two pupils were supported by classroom assistants.

The teacher had prepared challenging materials very thoroughly from the school's intranet. Pupils used their ICT skills accurately to slowly gain access using individual laptop computers. The task was simply and very briefly set so that pupils had enough time to complete it. There was a constant, lively interchange between the teacher, the very effective assistants and the pupils. Questioning was searching and thorough without making pupils feel threatened. Pupils were expected to achieve their best and received excellent support through very good prompting and questioning. This teased out, used and extended what the pupils knew and understood, gave them increased confidence and promoted excellent learning.

Pupils practised arithmetical skills to use birth rates and death rates for a number of countries to calculate population growth. They recognised positive and negative values. They could convert accurately rates per thousand into percentages and rank the countries correctly according to rate of growth. They could describe the growth of world population and express it as a line graph on a computer.

Teaching and learning were of a very high order, and achievement was excellent.

History

Provision in history is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve well in Years 7 to 9 and very well in Years 10 and 11.
- Pupils with special educational needs make very good progress.
- The pupils display very good attitudes to their work and enjoy their historical studies.
- The leadership and management of the department are good.
- The subject makes a good contribution to citizenship and to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of all pupils.
- ICT is not used enough and the system in use is unreliable.

Commentary

119. By the end of Year 9 the attainment of the majority of pupils is well above national expectations and this represents good overall achievement in the light of their above average attainment on entry to the school. In the 2004 GCSE examination results were well above the national average. The percentage of entrants gaining A* grades was more than twice the national average and all pupils obtained a pass grade. This represented very good achievement for both boys and girls who chose the subject.
120. The work seen in lessons and in exercise books showed that by Year 9 pupils reach standards that are well above average. Pupils have a very good knowledge and understanding of the topics studied, and have well-developed skills of source evaluation. Pupils show great interest in their work, which is always well matched to their age, ability, and interests. Pupils with special educational needs are particularly well catered for and make very good progress.
121. By Year 11 standards are also well above average. Pupils' work shows very good knowledge and understanding of modern European and American history. Pupils display very good critical thinking, source analysis and attendant literacy skills. Examination techniques are well taught and good assessment procedures accurately measure pupils' progress.
122. All pupils have good numeracy skills and improving skills in ICT. However, currently, access to computers is limited and the system is unreliable. Most pupils, including those designated as being gifted and talented, achieve their predicted grades in examinations and many exceed them. Pupils with special educational needs make very good progress with the help of smaller groups, adapted materials, modified teaching styles and some very good support. The history courses and the extra-curricular activities, including visits to places of historical interest, make a good contribution to citizenship and to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of all pupils.
123. Teaching and learning are very good. The teachers have very good subject knowledge, plan lessons very well and establish very good relationships. The great majority of pupils respond accordingly and cooperate fully. Particular strengths lie in the teaching of pupils with special educational needs, the teaching of source evaluation and the teaching of examination techniques.
124. Leadership and management are good, as they were at the time of the last inspection. There is a very effective team of experienced, specialist teachers who produce impressive results. Good improvement since the last inspection includes better accommodation, better resources and better facilities for ICT but the effectiveness of the latter is reduced by physical limitations.

Religious education

This subject was inspected by an inspector appointed by the Diocese of Blackburn.

TECHNOLOGY

Design and technology

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good teaching leads to pupils achieving very well.
- The quality of assessment and monitoring of students' progress and attainment are very good.
- The quality of pupils' work is of a very high standard as a result of pupils' very positive attitudes and the very good teaching.

Commentary

125. In teachers' assessments at the end of Year 9 in 2004, pupils' attainment was well above the national average. In the 2004 GCSE examinations for design and technology, results were well above the national average overall.
126. Inspection evidence shows that standards are well above average by Year 9, and that all pupils achieve very well. Pupils produce articles of very good quality and they have skills to express their ideas and communicate their designs. The quality of design work is of a very high standard and this is a direct outcome of the very high expectations of teachers, to which pupils respond extremely well. Pupils' attainment by the end of Year 11 is well above the standard expected nationally and the achievement of all pupils is very good. Higher attaining pupils produce exceptionally high quality work. This can be seen, for example, in the very detailed, well-presented project folders, and the very good practical project work in all the options offered by the department. Pupils make very good use of their design skills. Pupils are challenged to focus clearly on the requirements of the GCSE examination. As a result, they understand what they need to do and are helped to reach higher grades.
127. Teaching and learning are very good and occasionally excellent. Teachers use their very good subject knowledge, enthusiasm and high expectations to engage students. Effective classroom management is based on very good relationships. Teachers plan lessons very well and provide a very good range of activities, ensuring that all students are actively involved in their learning. Key learning points are systematically reinforced and new knowledge is introduced as and when it is needed, so that pupils use it immediately to develop their understanding. There is a very good level of support for pupils with special educational needs, helping these pupils to progress very well. Pupils' work is marked regularly and teachers provide encouraging, motivating comments that show pupils how to improve. These assessment outcomes are used consistently and effectively to adapt future planning and teaching.
128. The head of faculty provides very good leadership. Management of the department is very good. The head of faculty has rightly focused on developing rigorous lesson planning to improve teaching and learning, designing a curriculum that interests and meets the needs of all pupils. The use of assessment and the tracking and monitoring of pupils' progress are also priorities to help raise standards. Systems for assessment and monitoring of students progress and attainment are very well developed and are very good. Information from assessment is used to set challenging targets. The level of technician support for resistant materials is very good and makes a significant contribution to the smooth running of the department. Technical support for food technology is very limited. The quality and size of

accommodation are very good, meeting the needs of the curriculum. The department has access to computers and the provision for computer-aided design and manufacture is very good. This provides access to modern production methods, particularly for older pupils. The advanced skills teacher provides a very good level of expertise for curriculum development and is beginning to establish links with other schools. The faculty is recognised as a centre of excellence by examination boards, the local education authority and professional associations. There has been very good improvement since the last inspection.

Child development

129. GCSE child development was sampled. The standards achieved for the examination in 2004 were above average and standards of work seen for current pupils were well above average. Pupils have a secure knowledge and understanding of the stages of development of a foetus and how the mother will feel at different stages of the pregnancy. The teaching and learning are very good. Questioning and explanation are used effectively and lessons have well-structured sequences of activities based on clearly defined and shared learning outcomes. Teachers review pupils' progress regularly and give useful guidance on how to improve. The subject is well led and managed and there is a commitment to building on past successes to continue improving standards.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

Art and design

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards in GCSE examinations are well above the national average, particularly in grades A* and A.
- Achievement is good by the end of Year 9 and very good by the end of Year 11 because of the quality of teaching and the positive attitudes of the pupils.
- Professional relationships between teachers and pupils create a very good learning partnership and therefore achievement for all continues to improve.
- The leadership and management of the department are very good, promoting high expectations that instil high standards.
- There are insufficient opportunities for pupils to use computers to enhance their design skills, knowledge and understanding.

Commentary

130. In teachers' assessments at the end of Year 9 in 2004 attainment was above average, indicating good achievement from when pupils entered the school. In GCSE examinations standards were well above the national average, particularly in the higher grades A* and A.
131. Inspection evidence shows that by Year 9 standards are above average because the teachers promote and expect high standards and the pupils work hard. Pupils have access to a good range of materials and experiences and they respond well; therefore achievement for all is good.
132. In all lessons there exists a very good learning partnership between teachers and pupils. In all year groups pupils demonstrate pride in their achievements. By Year 11 standards are well above average; pupils have achieved very well. A significant number of pupils produce impressive results. The great majority of pupils have a very good understanding of the techniques used by different artists. Pupils' drawing skills are good.

133. Teaching is good overall and often very good. Lesson planning is very effective. Lessons are challenging and all pupils respond well. The personal development of all pupils is improving because they are encouraged to develop opinions through discussion. Pupils solve their own problems and they are also closely involved in the assessment of their own achievement, strengths and weaknesses. Speaking and listening skills are good. Opportunities for the promotion of numeracy are satisfactory; concepts of scale, proportion, symmetry, perspective, area and volume are introduced. Regular references are made in lessons to the work of significant artists and cultures, improving knowledge and understanding. Assessment is good. Very good pupil records are maintained. Pupils are aware of their progress and how they might improve. Assessment is not sufficiently influential on the planning and review of the curriculum.
134. Leadership and management are very good and based upon high expectations, a clear vision and support for all pupils. Department documentation is comprehensive, well developed and used very effectively. A good range of enrichment activities, visiting artists and external visits is improving the knowledge and understanding of pupils. The classrooms and surrounding areas contain impressive displays of work, promoting high standards and interest. There are not enough opportunities for pupils to use computers. Accommodation is satisfactory but presents problems for teachers because access to some rooms can only be gained by disturbing other classes. Resources are satisfactory. Improvement since the previous inspection is good.

Music

Provision in music is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve well due to good teaching.
- Results in GCSE examinations are consistently excellent.
- The department contributes positively to the strong Christian ethos of the school through participation in services, assemblies and public performances.
- Assessment in Year 9 is not accurate enough.
- Accommodation continues to be poor, and resources continue to be inadequate, both creating a barrier to further learning.

Commentary

135. In teachers' assessments at the end of Year 9 in 2004, results were very well above average, though assessment was over-generous. In the GCSE examinations taken in 2004, results were very well above average, continuing the trend over recent years. Of the 13 pupils entered, seven gained A* or A passes, and all gained A*-C passes.
136. Standards seen in Year 9 are above average, representing good achievement on prior attainment. Standards are different from the end of Year 9 teachers' assessments because those were inflated judgements. A well-structured scheme of work, which has been completely revised and updated since the last inspection, helps pupils of all abilities to achieve well by the end of Years 7, 8 and 9. By the end of Year 9, all pupils competently play extended melodies on keyboards, and many successfully add major and minor chords. Many boys, particularly, sing with confidence. Pupils having special needs achieve as well as others, as exemplified by a visually impaired pupil who played *Swing low, sweet chariot* on the keyboard with considerable proficiency.
137. In Year 11, standards are above average. Pupils are on track to gain well above average results by the end of the course. In Year 10, pupils have a complete range of practical performance from elementary to advanced standards. Standards of composition are good. Pupils have a secure knowledge of basic harmony and demonstrate effective use of

modulation in their work. Achievement is good. One Year 11 pupil, for example, has produced an impressive rondo for trombone, her first study instrument, using the jazz idiom. Good achievement was also shown by two Year 10 boys who did not have individual instrumental tuition before they started the course, and who are on course to get at least C grades.

138. Pupils have satisfactory attitudes to music in Years 7 to 9, though a few boys in Year 9 have difficulty concentrating. Pupils have very good attitudes in Years 10 and 11.
139. Teaching and learning are overall good. Since the last inspection, attention has been paid to providing tasks appropriate to the individual needs of pupils in practical work, and this is now enabling pupils of all abilities to achieve at least well. Regular ongoing references are made to National Curriculum levels so that pupils know what they must do to improve. When practical work is taking place, either individually or in group work, teachers call for plenary performances at regular intervals in order to establish progress. Teachers enable pupils with musical strengths to extend themselves, as exemplified by Year 9 guitarists' imaginative group work. Assessment procedures are consistently referred to in lessons.
140. Leadership and management are good. Successful strategies have been employed to address issues raised in the last inspection. The curriculum has been reviewed, with support from local education authority advisers. This has resulted in a wider curriculum, and the provision of appropriate tasks in practical work. Responsibilities within the department are suitably delegated, with strengths of individual members of staff being well used. The department contributes well to the Christian ethos of the school by taking part in, and often leading, assemblies, services and other acts of worship. Boys are attracted to examination courses and to extra-curricular activities just as strongly as girls are. Talented musicians are catered for through high quality extra-curricular ensembles such as the junior and senior bands. Members of the band enjoy exchanges with other schools in Poland and Germany.
141. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory. The accommodation continues to be poor, and is a barrier to the effective management of classes. The 15 Year 10 pupils have to do individual practice in one room and the single adjacent practice room. Occasionally, some pupils are sent to the chapel to practise on the other side of the school, creating acute supervision problems for the teacher. Resources continue to be poor. In practical work, pupils often have to share, two to a keyboard, which is a barrier to further learning. Year 10 and 11 pupils have to use computers in the special needs area, as none are available in the music department.

Drama

Provision in drama is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Results in GCSE examinations are outstanding.
- Practical work is very good due to pupils' high level of commitment and enthusiasm.
- Teaching is good and supports learning well.
- Some younger pupils lack concentration at the start of lessons.

Commentary

142. Results in GCSE were excellent in 2004 with all pupils gaining at least a B grade. The majority of pupils who opt for drama are girls but the few boys mostly achieve well. Standards in the current Year 11 are not as high as in the previous year. However, achievement in lessons and over time is good. Pupils with special educational needs are well integrated into groups and they achieve equally well. Pupils study drama in Years 7 and 8 but not in Year 9. Even with

limited time, standards are above average and pupils are especially good at performance work.

143. Pupils are self-motivated and work well in groups. They listen to each other's suggestions and rehearsals lead to improved performances. Year 8 pupils have good vocal range and assume convincing American accents when enacting scenes from *Bugsy Malone*. They improvise with confidence and imagination and have a good sense for what the audience wants. The large size of classes in Years 7 and 8 and the enthusiasm displayed often lead to very high noise levels which impede the concentration of some pupils. Lessons do not always have a warm-up activity even though the purpose of the activity is clearly established. Some boys in Year 8 do not concentrate and settle quickly to work during the introductions to lessons.
144. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 work very hard on preparing practical demonstrations and respond positively to the teacher's advice. They collaborate well on dance routines and have a clear understanding of the themes in plays they study. Their written work is above average. Though a few of the reviews of theatre visits are rather descriptive, the majority of pupils make astute comments about stage sets and lighting as well as interpretations of character.
145. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Pupils are allowed to develop their own ideas though they do not always demonstrate the good practice to others. Marking is very good and shows pupils exactly what they need to do to improve. Questioning during rehearsals and in the evaluation of work is sharp and leads pupils to new ideas. Teaching promotes literacy and the use of ICT well. There is evidence of detailed research using the Internet, and beautifully presented displays showing America in the 'Roaring Twenties'. Pupils read their parts in plays with good dramatic effect.
146. The quality of leadership and management is good. There are very good links with the local primary school. Year 7 pupils research tastes in stories of young children and then perform them before an audience of seven year olds. Pupils develop good social skills and learn about important moral and cultural issues. The quality of the accommodation is fairly basic and the clothes that some pupils wear restrict the freedom of movement in active drama work. Progress since the last inspection is good.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Provision in physical education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of teaching and learning in many lessons results in good progress overall.
- Very good relationships between pupils and with members of staff make a significant contribution to the learning in most lessons.
- An excellent range of very high quality activities after school supports and enriches work done in lessons.
- Assessment information is not used by all teachers to ensure work matches the needs of all pupils.
- Pupils' skills of analysis and evaluation are not being consistently applied.

Commentary

147. In the 2004 teachers' assessments of pupils at the end of Year 9, results were well above the national average. GCSE physical education is not studied.
148. Standards are above the national average by Year 9. This represents good achievement from average attainment on entry to the school. Girls and boys have a good range of skills which they apply effectively in competitive games situations. The ability of pupils to observe and

analyse performance is below average overall, but, when it is developed and used, it has a significant impact on improving performance skills. Standards obtained by pupils by Year 11 are in line with the national average overall although several examples of well above average performance skills were seen. In Year 11 netball girls have above average passing and receiving skills and tactical awareness which they apply well in a competitive game situation. Achievement is satisfactory overall, and frequently good. Progress is sometimes restricted by the emphasis in boys' lessons on coaching games and by the lack of some opportunities for girls to develop skills in a chosen activity for a suitable length of time

149. Teaching and learning are good overall, and are occasionally excellent. They are better in Years 7 to 9 than in Years 10 and 11. Teachers' good subject knowledge is regularly conveyed to pupils through perceptive observation of performance, intervention and effective directed question and answer sessions. A good range of teaching strategies and sequence of activities involving both individual and collaborative learning is also a feature of these lessons. In an excellent Year 7 swimming lesson, pupils developed their confidence in the water and their backstroke technique. The teacher gave pupils responsibility for their own learning within a well-structured framework and intervened very effectively throughout the lesson to ensure that technique improved. Pupils were also encouraged to analyse the performance of others in the group, developing both their skills of analysis and the technique of others in the group. Relationships between staff and pupils are very good and pupils respond with enthusiasm to all lessons. Assessment of pupils' performance in the best lessons is used to enhance teaching, although targets are only very rarely linked to National Curriculum levels. Assessment information is not used to ensure that the needs of pupils of all abilities are met. Individual pupils are not always set clear targets for improvement and there are limited strategies for extending the higher attaining pupils. The department is just starting to involve pupils in setting their own targets for improvement. Opportunities to use ICT are missed. The school has a strong sporting tradition and there is an outstanding range of after-school activities of a very high quality for pupils of all abilities to support and enrich work done in lessons. Physical education teachers and many other members of staff devote a great deal of time to supporting these activities. The school competes very successfully with other schools in a range of sports and many pupils achieve representative honours at regional and national level.
150. Leadership and management, through separate boys' and girls' departments, are effective. Day-to-day management is good and staff share a vision for the department based on the achievement of high standards and the provision of excellent enrichment opportunities for all pupils. There is insufficient focus on the development of teaching and learning and opportunities are missed to share good practice in teaching. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory. Although some good examples of the development of evaluation and analysis of performance were seen, teachers do not use assessment information enough to improve teaching or to make enough demands of higher attaining pupils. Development of pupils' knowledge of health-related fitness is still not fully exploited.

BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES

Business studies

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve very well due to very good teaching and learning.
- Pupils work very well together, and share ideas and information freely.
- The department is very well led and managed.

Commentary

151. In the GCSE examinations in 2004, results were well above average with a significant proportion of pupils gaining the highest grades.
152. Inspection evidence confirms that standards are well above average and achievement is very good. Pupils have a secure knowledge and understanding of business practice and, for example, have a very good grasp of who the stake holders are in a business and what motivates employees. All pupils show an interest and enthusiasm for the subject. When carrying out research for assignments and class presentations, they are good at helping each other and discussions are common, relevant to the work and contribute usefully to the good learning. Pupils complete most of their work on assignments in their own time. Pupils' very good achievement is a direct result of the effective teaching which demands much of them.
153. Teaching and learning are very good. The teachers have a very good command of the subject and transmit their enthusiasm for the subject to their pupils. They are good at anticipating aspects of the subject which are likely to be misunderstood and make good use of questioning to check on pupils' understanding. When pupils work individually, teachers make good use of their time, raise challenging questions, for example, about marketing practices and applying them to a range of products. Teachers ensure that quieter pupils understand the work, and they also direct the efforts of the more enthusiastic pupils. Teachers have high expectations as indicated in the work planned; the evidence from the work presented shows that pupils have the necessary skills to meet the demands of the coursework requirements.
154. The subject is well led and managed. A well-organised system of recording individual pupils' assessments for each unit of work, and comparing current standards with previous attainment, provides a successful way of identifying any underachievement. This leads to useful feedback to pupils about their progress and comments on how they might improve their work. The consistency in the quality of teaching has led to improvement in standards. There is a good level of pupil self-assessment. The attainment for current pupils is very high and higher attaining pupils are likely to gain the highest grades.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Citizenship

Provision in citizenship is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning are good, leading to overall good standards.
- Leadership and management are very good.
- Community days enrich citizenship provision.
- Pupils demonstrate responsible attitudes to citizenship through activities such as the Millennium Volunteers scheme.

Commentary

155. Citizenship is taught through subject areas, and there is a particularly strong approach through the history, geography, science, English, religious education and agriculture and horticulture departments. Some elements of citizenship are incorporated into the PSHE study programmes. The subject policy and scheme of work reflect the school's strong Christian ethos, enabling pupils to obtain the skills for life, by leading them to understand the whole world in which they live, and by helping them to develop lively and enquiring minds.

156. Standards are above average by Year 9 and pupils achieve well. For example, in a history lesson, pupils showed a good awareness of, and views about, immigration and refugees. They made intelligent comments and asked pertinent questions about refugees. In another lesson, pupils held well-constructed arguments about the MMR vaccine, and whether the Prime Minister should have revealed whether his youngest son had been vaccinated. Through agriculture and horticulture studies, pupils adopt a responsible attitude to farming and animal welfare by taking an active part in rearing animals themselves.
157. In the Year 11 standards are above average and pupils achieve well. In a religious education lesson pupils had well-informed views about standing up for their rights in society, arising from discussion about the murder of the El Salvadoran Archbishop Romero. Pupils have good attitudes to citizenship lessons across the school.
158. Teaching and learning are good overall, and frequently very good. Teachers work hard to raise pupils' interest by using attractive, informative resources. They keep lessons moving at a fast pace, and make pupils think for themselves. There is always a high degree of challenge. In the lessons observed, teachers demonstrated great enthusiasm for the citizenship aspect of their own subject, and this kept the pupils tightly focused on the subject, and involved.
159. The subject is very well led and managed. The vision for improvement is very good and the subject has been implemented very effectively. Staff involved in leading and coordinating the subject are well trained and informed. There is good liaison with subject leaders and very effective monitoring and evaluation of how citizenship is taught. Teachers' assessment and pupils' self-assessment procedures are good, and reports are full and informative.
160. The timetable is suspended for occasional whole days for citizenship topics and this arrangement is very effective. There are close associations with the local community and pupils receive many opportunities to take responsibility, for example to help members of the community. Pupils work extensively to raise money for charity, and show responsible attitudes, as exemplified by many pupils selling Fair Trade food, and by all pupils taking part in the Red Nose Day. The subject contributes very strongly to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils.

Personal, social and health education (PSHE)

161. PSHE contributes to the very good, caring ethos of the school, to the very good attitudes and behaviour of the pupils, and to the pupils' awareness of citizenship matters. Arrangements for PSHE are good and effectively stress the importance of PSHE to pupils. The suspension of the timetable across Years 7 to 10 for six separate days each year and for two days for Year 11 pupils enables all teachers to teach aspects of PSHE which the coordinator has prepared. Visiting speakers from a range of backgrounds are brought in to enrich provision. No PSHE lessons were observed during the inspection. The subject meets requirements to teach sex education and drugs awareness education.

OTHER COURSES

Agriculture and horticulture

Provision in agriculture and horticulture is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning are good and pupils achieve well.
- Pupils have very positive attitudes to the subject and gain much from it.
- Pupils' learning about citizenship is very good.
- The subject is very well led and organised.

- The quality of teaching rooms is unsatisfactory, though the range of rooms, farm accommodation and gardens are very good.

Commentary

162. All pupils in Years 7 to 9 follow the subject and the course includes significant elements of citizenship.
163. GCSE results in 2004 were good with nearly all pupils obtaining a grade A*-G and nearly 60 per cent obtaining A*-C grades.
164. Inspection evidence shows that pupils achieve well against the course objectives. They have a good understanding of cattle, sheep, pig and poultry rearing. They are familiar with the physiology of the animals they study and that are kept on the school farm. Their studies lead them to understanding the principles of humane treatment of animals for food production, the value of organically produced food and the economics of farming. They enjoy the work they do and are happy to work outside, despite inclement weather. Their understanding of plant growth, agriculture and horticulture is good. Overall, standards obtained are above average by Year 11 and the great majority of pupils, whatever their prior attainment, achieve very well.
165. Teaching is very good overall. Teachers set challenging tasks based on their own very good subject knowledge. They use all of the available resources very well, and cope effectively in unsatisfactory classroom accommodation that is too small and dilapidated. They encourage responsible attitudes to animals and farming and help pupils effectively to grasp the important links between humane farming, economic food production and healthy diet. Work is well matched to pupils' individual learning needs.
166. The subject is very well managed. The head of department provides very good leadership and has a very clear view of what the school could do to improve provision further. The range of accommodation is good overall with extensive gardens, greenhouses, stables and animal enclosures that are used well, providing pupils with a very good experience. Links with other establishments offering similar courses are very good – an essential element of sustaining the high quality of provision in a subject area where there is limited provision both locally and nationally. Improvement has been good since the last inspection.

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM

In the inspection, 12 subjects and courses were inspected and are reported on in detail. Work in other subjects and courses was sampled and contributed to the overall picture of teaching and learning in the school.

The table below shows entry and performance information for courses completed in 2004.

Level 3 GCE AS level courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Art and design	2	100.0	78.3	50.0	21.6	45.0	28.5
Biology	12	66.7	63.5	8.3	10.4	17.5	19.8
Business studies	8	87.5	75.3	25.0	15.4	30.0	25.7
Chemistry	11	72.7	70.3	0.0	13.2	22.7	23.0
Communication studies	7	57.1	87.2	14.3	24.9	20.0	32.8
Drama	4	100.0	86.6	25.0	19.8	37.5	30.9

English / English language	6	83.3	85.3	33.3	16.1	31.7	29.0
English literature	7	85.7	86.2	14.3	17.4	28.6	29.7
French	15	80.0	79.8	6.7	19.4	24.7	28.2
Design and technology	3	100.0	72.6	0.0	13.9	33.3	24.3
General studies	70	47.1	73.6	0.0	16.9	10.1	25.5
Geography	4	100.0	75.5	75.0	20.4	45.0	27.0
German	3	66.7	81.6	0.0	18.8	13.3	28.8
History	6	83.3	82.2	33.3	20.8	33.3	29.2
Home economics	9	100.0	71.5	33.3	20.0	40.0	25.9
Information technology	4	100.0	66.6	25.0	8.8	42.5	20.6
Mathematics	19	57.9	59.9	21.1	14.1	23.7	20.5
Music	3	100.0	79.8	0.0	16.9	23.3	27.5
Other Sciences	1	0.0	67.4	0.0	14.8	0.0	22.8
Physics	10	70.0	66.4	10.0	14.8	22.0	22.4
Religious studies	6	66.7	82.2	0.0	26.1	21.7	31.2
Spanish	2	100.0	77.1	0.0	17.0	30.0	26.5
Sports / PE studies	2	100.0	72.2	0.0	11.8	20.0	22.8

Level 3 GCE A level and VCE courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Art and craft	12	100.0	98.3	58.3	50.2	95.0	87.1
Biology	11	100.0	96.6	18.2	40.0	70.9	79.3
Business studies	9	100.0	98.9	66.7	39.4	97.8	81.8
Chemistry	8	100.0	97.7	25.0	50.0	77.5	85.7
Communication studies	33	100.0	99.2	45.5	40.4	90.3	83.5
Drama	13	100.0	99.6	46.2	42.8	89.2	85.1
English / English language	12	100.0	99.2	66.7	36.4	96.7	81.1
English literature	13	100.0	99.4	30.8	44.9	83.1	85.5
French	12	100.0	99.0	25.0	53.1	71.7	88.9
Design and technology	8	100.0	97.8	75.0	35.0	107.5	77.9
General studies	46	100.0	94.9	8.7	30.5	65.7	72.9
Geography	14	100.0	98.8	42.9	46.4	84.3	85.2
German	4	100.0	98.6	25.0	49.6	55.0	86.3
History	26	100.0	99.0	38.5	45.6	82.3	85.1
Home economics	18	100.0	97.8	77.8	43.0	98.9	80.4
Information technology	19	100.0	96.3	21.0	25.7	76.8	71.1
Mathematics	13	100.0	96.8	53.8	56.6	92.3	89.5
Music	3	100.0	98.2	0.0	37.1	66.7	79.5
Other Sciences	9	100.0	97.4	11.1	44.2	57.8	82.5

Other Social studies	1	0.0	97.4	0.0	42.5	0.0	81.6
Physics	7	100.0	96.7	57.1	45.3	85.7	82.6
Religious studies	6	83.3	99.1	16.7	49.5	56.7	87.4
Spanish	1	100.0	98.2	100.0	53.5	120.0	88.7
Sports / PE studies	11	100.0	97.8	18.2	30.9	67.3	75.4
Business	30	96.7	91.6	53.3	24.1	81.3	67.9
Health and social care	24	95.8	93.5	58.3	24.9	87.5	70.0
Leisure and recreation	14	92.9	90.7	50.0	18.3	81.4	64.6
Travel and tourism	12	91.7	90.1	16.7	19.6	70.0	64.9

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

English

Provision in English is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve very well in both language and literature courses due to very good, challenging, teaching.
- Results in the language and literature course at A2-level in 2003 were well above the national average.
- Leadership and management are very effective.
- Uptake for the subject is strong and students have very positive attitudes to their work.

Commentary

167. Results in the GCE AS-level examination in 2004 for language and literature were above the national average. The percentage of students achieving grades A and B was much above the national figure. Results at AS-level in the literature course were in line with the national average.
168. The GCE A2-level results in 2004 for language and literature were significantly above the national average with a much higher percentage than the national average of students achieving grades A and B. These results showed a major improvement on those in 2003. Results in literature in 2004 were in line with the national average, with all students reaching a pass grade. This performance was slightly below that of the previous year overall and a result of lower attainment on entry to the course.
169. The standard of work seen in both courses in Year 12 is above that found nationally. In all classes students are enthusiastic and well motivated. Their oral work is of a very high standard. In both group work and open class discussion they are articulate, mature and well informed. Most students in the class are targeted to achieve high grades and their command of the technical terminology, of what is virtually a new subject for them, is very sound. Their discussion was mature and knowledgeable. All students respond very positively to the very good teaching.
170. In one lesson in Year 13, students in the literature course were comparing poems by Emily Dickinson and Manley Hopkins. They responded imaginatively to very good teaching and in their group discussions explored questions of the poets' styles and intentions. In both courses students are targeted to achieve high standards in the examinations. As in Year 12, their attitude is positive and committed. They express respect and gratitude for the high quality of teaching they receive.

171. The quality of teaching is very good overall. Staff have very high academic standards and expect students to do well. Teachers use a wide range of stimulating approaches with ample opportunities for group work as well as private research. The high standard of students' oral work is rightly fully exploited. Teachers use questioning skilfully to draw the best out of students. Students' work is marked with great care and thought.
172. The popularity of the two courses demonstrates how well the department is thought of by students. One or two teaching groups are too large for effective interaction. The subject is very well managed and improvement has been good since the previous inspection.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

173. Literacy skills are above average overall. In all subjects students express themselves well in writing and in most subjects read extensively. The exception is in business studies where students do not always read sufficiently around the subject. Overall, teachers have high expectations of how students express themselves both in writing and speech and provide many opportunities to develop literacy skills.

Modern foreign languages

174. German and French were focus subjects. Two lessons in Spanish were sampled, one in Year 12 and one in Year 13. Standards in Year 12 Spanish are well above average, and achievement is good as a result of good teaching and students' very good attitudes to learning. In Year 13 Spanish, standards represent some underachievement in relation to prior attainment. This is because prior learning in the short GCSE course did not prepare students adequately for advanced level work. Teaching and learning are satisfactory, but vary between satisfactory and good.
175. GCSE Russian was also sampled. Students achieve very well and standards are above average. Very good teaching enables the two students in Year 13 to communicate effectively in Russian, demonstrating their grasp of the grammar. Russian, which is taken by 10 students in Year 12, contributes well to students' cultural development.

French

Provision in French is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- In Year 12 standards are above average and students are achieving well.
- Teaching of Year 12 is challenging and students work hard because they are highly motivated.
- In Year 13 achievement is unsatisfactory because some students do not have a firm grasp of grammar.

Commentary

176. A-level results in 2004 were well below the national average, particularly in relation to higher grades. They were lower overall than in the previous year. Students did not achieve as well as expected in relation to their GCSE grades in either year group. AS results in 2004 were below average overall, but were well below in relation to the higher grades. They represented an improvement from the previous year when they were well below average overall.
177. Standards are below the average level in Year 13 and students' achievement is unsatisfactory given their prior attainment at GCSE. The major weakness is the use of grammar. Students write at length in French, using sophisticated structures, and speak confidently, successfully

communicating messages. However, they still make basic grammatical errors. Vocabulary is limited and these limitations affect standards in reading and listening comprehension. Whilst these students achieved very well at GCSE, the department realised they were not adequately prepared for an advanced course. Good independent learning resources have been made available to consolidate learning and revision of grammar has helped students to improve, but time is too limited to allow students to reach their full potential. Some students have not made as much use of independent learning as they needed to.

178. Students in Year 12, who have benefited from more intensive grammar teaching in Years 10 and 11, are reaching above average standards and are achieving well. Several students are reaching the highest levels and the very large group is extremely well motivated. They work well independently as well as in class.
179. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall, but it varies from very good to unsatisfactory. The best lessons present students with a high level of challenge, which they respond to eagerly, reaching high standards. Lessons are conducted in French, and the teacher prompts students to give extended, accurate responses, using complex structures. Grammatical and pronunciation errors are corrected or correctly modelled and the pace is fast. In contrast, where teaching is unsatisfactory, students and teachers use too much English, tasks are not sufficiently challenging and students work at a relaxed pace. In most lessons, students have very good attitudes to learning.
180. Take-up of French in Year 12 has increased significantly and the large group is well managed. The curriculum in Years 10 and 11 for top sets has been modified to ensure pupils are well prepared for further study. There are good opportunities for students in Year 12 to undertake work experience in Paris. Leadership and management are satisfactory overall and there has been satisfactory improvement since the previous inspection.

German

Provision in German is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Achievement in Year 12 is good and improving as a result of good teaching that focuses on developing students' grammatical skills.
- The subject is well led with a clear vision of what improvements are needed to improve achievement.
- Exchange links with a German school have contributed well to the learning and achievement of both Year 13 students.

Commentary

181. In each of the previous two years only one student out of a group of four has achieved as expected and results at GCE A-level have been below average.
182. Students with GCSE grade C have been accepted onto the course. Standards seen in Year 13 are below average, though at AS-level both students had obtained a grade C. In Year 12, with six students, standards are average and rising. In this group the presence of two very high attaining students lifts the standard of others. Achievement is satisfactory overall and good in Year 12 where students respond very well to good and often very good teaching. Students' grammatical skills have limited their achievement, but these are improving.
183. Teaching is good overall. Teachers use their skills in German to good effect, and a strength of the learning is how well students work together in pair or group work situations. Laptop computers with a wireless link to the Internet are a useful resource which enables students to

read authentic German text, for example about renewable energy sources. Teachers are rightly concentrating on developing students' grammar skills early in the sixth form and this is contributing to students' learning and improving achievement.

184. Students' attitudes are very good, showing strong motivation. They participate in conversation readily and enjoy the subject. Five of the six students in Year 12 are taking part in this year's exchange.
185. Leadership and management are very good and strongly focused on raising standards. Teachers have identified underlying achievement problems arising from the different demands of GCSE and GCE A-level courses and have made significant efforts to resolve them. Improvement since the previous inspection has been satisfactory.

MATHEMATICS

186. The focus of the inspection was on the main A-level course. Other programmes were sampled, particularly that for further mathematics. Entry figures for the A-level supplementary course are declining, but results have been above the national average for the past few years. The further mathematics course attracts a small body of students and, again, the results are above the national average. Standards overall are above average and students achieve very well at both AS and A2-levels. The quality of teaching and learning is consistently very good. Students' very positive attitudes and very good application ensure good outcomes. Some weakness with previously learned concepts persists in all courses.

Mathematics

Provision in mathematics is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are well above national averages for both the AS and A2-level programmes, and students achieve very well.
- Teaching is very good and staff have very good subject knowledge.
- Unsatisfactory accommodation erodes the overall quality of work.

Commentary

187. In the AS examinations of 2004, standards were well above the national average, maintaining the good results established in earlier years. Likewise A2 results were well above the national average. On both programmes retention rates are variable with the AS programme showing a year-on-year fall. In terms of students' attainment when they were in Year 11 these results represent very good achievement when allowance is made for the increasing complexity of the material being studied.
188. Inspection evidence shows that standards are well above average by Year 13. Students handled general solutions for trigonometric equations and used differentiation to determine stationary values effectively. They found the stationary values using purely algebraic means. However, students displayed some hesitancy when relying on prior knowledge.
189. Teaching and learning are very good. Teachers' very good subject knowledge is evident and engages students' interest and attention. The atmosphere in lessons is conducive to a high rate of work, but, too often, students are laconic, so limiting teacher-student interaction and opportunities for fruitful discussion. Students know they can turn to staff out of lesson time if they need help with work.

190. Leadership and management are very good. Systems are in place to monitor carefully the work of each student. Accommodation is sometimes poor, when, for example, lessons are held in rooms where furniture or the roller board quality is poor. This does not provide students with the impression of a valued subject.
191. Since the last inspection improvement has been good. Performance in both the AS and A2-level programmes has improved and is now well above national averages in both. Teaching has improved and is now very good.

Mathematics across the curriculum

192. Numeracy in the sixth form is good. Students have the skills to cope with using graphs and tables, and to handle statistical information and numerical data. They apply these skills effectively to evaluating scientific investigation results, and analysing business and government statistics. Their numeracy skills are good and used extensively in science, business studies, design and technology and media studies.

SCIENCE

193. The focus was on biology but lessons were sampled in human biology, physics, chemistry, and environmental science.
194. In human biology, students taking the A-level GCE in 2004 did as well as expected, considering their GCSE results. Results in the AS examination were below average. Two lessons were observed. Teaching was good overall and led to well-directed independent learning. Examination technique was satisfactorily dealt with and the most recent modular examination results indicate students are achieving as well as expected, relative to their attainment on entry to the course.
195. In physics, A-level examination results in 2004 were above average. One lesson was sampled. The teaching was very good and was delivered in a manner that appealed to the students. Their attitudes were exemplary and the standards achieved were above average.
196. In chemistry, AS and A2 examination results were in line with the national average. Two lessons were observed and standards were above average in Year 12 and Year 13. Overall, students achieved well. Teaching was good overall and sometimes very good, with teachers setting high standards and making subject matter relevant and interesting. Students had very positive attitudes and worked hard.
197. In environmental science, examination results were below the national average, but all students entering gained a pass grade. One lesson was observed. The teaching was very good. The lesson was well planned and structured to involve students' contributions and ideas. Class discussion led to good understanding of the issues of waste products. Students are making good progress, relative to their target grades.

Biology

Provision in biology is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers' command of the subject material is very good. Lessons are very informative.
- Occasionally lessons lack pace and stimulation.
- There are good resources provided by the department for independent learning.
- Students' attitudes are very positive, contributing to their achievement.
- The use of assessment to support learning and raise standards is underdeveloped.

- ICT is being used well for research but its use in measurement and data analysis is underdeveloped.

Commentary

198. In the 2004 GCE A2 examination results were in line with the national average but lower than in the previous year. The percentage of students gaining the higher A and B grades was below average, but all those taking the examination gained a pass grade. Considering their GCSE results, they did as well as expected. In the AS examinations, results were in line with results seen nationally.
199. The standards of work of the current students are broadly average. The small group of students in Year 13 achieve satisfactorily compared to their attainment on entry to the course. They have a good understanding of topics such as inheritance and human physiology, and are able to make good use of statistics when studying ecological issues. Practical work is carried out competently and confidently. The boys make significant contributions to the development of lessons but the girls are more diffident. The larger group of Year 12 students have made a positive start to their post-16 work and make satisfactory progress. They have very positive attitudes in lessons and are keen to succeed. Most are developing good independent learning skills, which effectively support work done in class, as seen, for example, in one lesson on enzyme technology.
200. Teaching is satisfactory. Teachers have very good command of the subject and well-planned lessons support progressive learning. Handouts and notes provided are clear and detailed, though occasional lessons lack pace. Teaching is very informative but often lacks methods and styles that challenge and stimulate. Resource material provides good support for independent learning, and much attention is given to examination preparation. ICT is used well for research but is insufficiently used in measurement and experimentation. Students' attitudes to work are very good and have a positive effect on learning and progress.
201. Leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory. The programme of study is well organised and is being developed to make it more accessible to those students whose other subjects are not predominantly scientific. Students benefit from being taught by two teachers and there are regular meetings with the teachers of human biology to share ideas. Assessment is satisfactory. Students have target grades and progress is assessed regularly. There is, however, no structured programme in place to make use of assessment in raising standards.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

202. ICT was sampled. One lesson of ICT was seen. Standards are above average and students achieve well. Students take great interest in the subject and work hard. Teaching and learning are good.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

203. Sixth form students make good use of ICT skills in many subjects. In all subjects they make extensive use of the Internet for research purposes and, where they are required to complete projects, they make effective use of word-processing skills in the presentation of their work. In media studies there is good use of digital photography and animation. In physical education teachers make effective use of the technology in teaching A-level with slide shows. Sixth form students are competent users of the technology, and make effective use of the e-mail facility provided by the school to transfer work between home and school. Although they have some access to computers in different areas of the school, there is insufficient access to computers in the resource centre, where the four available are in constant demand. There are no computers in the dedicated sixth form library area. The provision of computers for sixth form use for independent study is unsatisfactory.

HUMANITIES

204. History was the focus subject and geography was sampled. Attainment on entry to geography in the sixth form is average; standards at both AS and A2 are average and achievement is satisfactory. Teaching is good and better than learning because some pupils in both years lack study skills. In Year 12 students have good recall of material studied. Year 13 students practise examination questions and manipulate a large amount of case study material effectively to meet question requirements.

History

Provision in history is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Purposeful teaching leads to good achievement and a 100 per cent pass rate.
- The teaching conveys information but also presents some challenge to pupils.
- Relationships are very good and enhance the quality of learning.
- The students are all very well motivated and the subject makes a good contribution to their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- Students do not learn enough through discussion and debate with each other.
- The wireless ICT system does not work effectively and loses connection with the Internet at crucial moments.

Commentary

205. In the A2-level examinations in 2004, results were broadly average, though all students obtained a pass grade. Results were lower overall than in the previous year but as in 2003 all students obtained a pass grade. This demonstrated good achievement based on students' prior attainment, and very good achievement for a few students. A significant small proportion of students have not studied the subject before and some do not have high grades at GCSE. Over the last two years history has become a popular choice for students in the sixth form and numbers are strong. The drop-out rate is low and some students positively want to study history at university level.
206. Inspection evidence indicates standards are currently above average. A strength of the learning is the way in which teachers and students discuss examination requirements and methods of tackling different types of source-based questions. This accounts for the fact that all students consistently gain pass grades, if not necessarily the highest grade. Teachers and students form a harmonious group and the learning experiences make a good contribution to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the students. The best lesson seen involved the use of laptop computers to research what the Nazis considered to be decadent art, though the computer system is unreliable because of poor wireless links.
207. Teaching and learning are good. The teachers have very good subject knowledge, very good relationships, good planning and a purposeful delivery that conveys information but also calls for some challenge and individual response. The students are all very well motivated and receptive to teacher guidance. While the interaction between teachers and students contributes significantly to learning, several opportunities to make positive use of debate between students are missed. The department has strength in the way it treats historical source evaluation and has established the literacy and thinking skills needed to perform it successfully. Leadership and management of the subject are good and result in good standards.

BUSINESS STUDIES

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards attained are well above average and students achieve very well.
- Very good teaching is given by a dedicated team.
- Leadership is very good and the subject is well managed.
- A lack of reading around the subject impedes students' performance in both class work and examinations.
- Accommodation and lack of specialised resources limit teaching and learning provision.

Commentary

208. In the sixth form, the school offers A2 and AS-levels and AVCE. Results in 2004 were well above the average at A2-level in the AVCE and above average at AS-level. At AS and AVCE, boys did better than girls and their results were far better than those of boys nationally.
209. Standards are well above average overall. In Year 13 standards are above average. Students' projects and written work are interesting, well produced and professionally presented. Higher attaining students evaluate evidence effectively, make reasoned judgements and present appropriate, well-supported conclusions. Lower attaining students demonstrate clear understanding of key business concepts but struggle to master the analysis, interpretation and evaluation of data. Standards in Year 12 are well above average. Higher attaining students apply relevant theory and show a good grasp of business concepts, but only the very highest attaining students develop an explanation into a fully substantiated view. Standards on the AVCE course are well above average. Students have very good basic understanding of the subject matter and accumulate knowledge quickly. Relative weaknesses are the interpretation and analysis of data and a few students' failure to retain the knowledge and understanding over time.
210. Achievement in all courses is very good. However, students' progress is hindered by the lack of wider and in-depth reading around the subject, which is a result of additional interests outside school reducing the time they can devote to learning.
211. Teaching and learning are very good. Teachers have excellent rapport with students and their expert subject knowledge underpins discussion and clarity of explanations. Students respond well and work maturely overall. Lessons are carefully planned, and effective use is made of case studies and other activities to allow students to apply and extend their learning. Work is challenging and students are very well supported academically. Teachers often promote independent learning, but occasionally are overly didactic. Progress is best where students apply assessment and evaluative criteria to their work. However, a small number of students are happy to be passive recipients rather than active participants in their own learning.
212. The curriculum is broad and balanced and offers opportunities for success. Accommodation is good in terms of size of rooms but lacks specialist accommodation. This militates against the creation of a business and enterprise milieu to encourage students to engage in activities such as pro-share competitions and Young Enterprise. Where they have access to ICT, students use computers effectively to undertake research and to prepare reports for coursework. However, insufficient access to ICT and professional software has an adverse effect on learning. Links with business are not yet sufficiently comprehensive to give sufficient opportunities for students to gain more access to the world of business.
213. Leadership is very good and the subject is well managed. The newly appointed head of department checks and analyses results carefully to plan areas for improvement, and sets

clear targets for action as a consequence. He has a clear vision for the future of the subject. This includes plans to further strengthen the strong academic and vocational aspects of provision to meet the differing needs and aspirations of future students. He is well supported by colleagues, whom he in turn supports. He is a very good role model for a department committed to the highest standards. He is building on previous strengths but has had too little time for his own vision to have full and practical effect. However, there has been sufficient progress to augur well for the future of the department.

214. Business education in the sixth form has made very good progress since the previous inspection, particularly in the understanding for the need to develop students' capacity for independent learning.

ENGINEERING, TECHNOLOGY AND MANUFACTURING

Design and technology

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The achievement of students is excellent.
- The quality of work of current students is of an exceptionally high standard.
- Teaching and learning are very good.
- The subject is very well led and managed.
- The curriculum offered to students is very good.

Commentary

215. The GCE A2-level results in 2004 were much higher than average; all pupils obtained a pass grade and three-quarters of them obtained A or B grades. Results were similar to those of 2003. The numbers of AS results were too small to compare with the national average, but all pupils obtained a pass grade.
216. The quality of current work is of an exceptionally high standard. Students' achievement is excellent in relation to predictions based on GCSE results. Students' recall of knowledge and skills is very good and they apply it in a range of contexts. Their project work is of an exceptionally high standard, indicates very high expectations by teachers and shows the same confidence as students' class work.
217. Teaching is very good, and occasionally excellent, so students learn very well as a result. The principal features of the very good teaching are clear objectives, sharp planning, brisk pace and a range of teaching strategies to bring about learning. The teachers have very good subject knowledge and use this very well in discussion, questioning and demonstration of the tasks set. Teachers provide good opportunities for students to practise what has been discussed and to develop their skills and techniques. Teachers provide students with opportunities to carry out detailed individual research, formulate ideas, record their findings and prepare specifications – students respond well to this approach. Learning is very good overall. Students are attentive, work productively and rise to the challenge of designing products for a specific purpose. Students support and help each other effectively and, in groups, talk and listen to each other in a mature way as part of their learning. They develop confidence in offering ideas in open discussion and this is particularly good where they evaluate their designs for their lighting projects.
218. Leadership and management are very good. There is a high level of commitment to building on what has already been achieved and to improving standards. Planning is closely linked to the course requirements and determines development in teaching. Recording students'

progress is very well established, as is setting of targets based on careful analysis of performance, through review, evaluation and assessment. Students are entered for national design competitions and are always successful; their projects have been reported in national design journals. The department has established a national reputation for excellent practice in product design and innovation.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

219. The focus was art and design, theatre studies and media studies. Music was sampled. A Year 12 and a Year 13 lesson were observed during the inspection. In both lessons, the very good teaching and learning and the excellent attitudes of the students led to above average standards in Year 12 and extremely high standards in Year 13.

Art and design

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Achievement is very good due to the quality of teaching and the range of opportunities available to the students.
- Teaching is very good. Teachers have high expectations and work as a very effective team.
- The attitude of the students and their professional relationships with their teachers are excellent, providing a very effective learning partnership in lessons.
- Leadership and management are very good, providing a clear vision and the promotion of high standards.
- The use of computers has not had sufficient impact on the development of design skills or research.

Commentary

220. Results were above the national average in 2004 and an improvement on the results of 2003. The number of students in 2004 studying AS-level was too small for statistical comparisons, but results were either A or B grades. In A2-level in 2004, standards were above the national average with boys performing slightly better than the girls.

221. Standards seen are well above average and indicate that standards are improving. Work produced is good, often very good. A small number of students did not study art at GCSE level. Student portfolios demonstrate that students work hard and respond well to very good teaching. A majority of students are confident when working with a variety of materials and resources. Students are articulate and can discuss their work with confidence and demonstrate pride in their achievements. Their attitude toward the subject borders on excellent, and is a major contributor to the quality of work produced. Achievement is very good when consideration is given to the students' average prior attainment.

222. Teaching is very good. Teachers work as a very effective team with a wide range of skills. Lessons are challenging and very well planned, providing all students with opportunities to progress. Classroom organisation and management are very effective. The professional relationships between teachers and students are excellent, providing a pleasant atmosphere in the lessons. The use of a wide range of resources maintains students' interest and helps them to learn. Regular references are made to the work of significant artists and cultures. The department has made regular use of the skills of artists in residence, which makes a considerable contribution towards the quality of education being provided. Students are also given the opportunity to make visits to regional and national art galleries. Students rise to the challenges set by their teachers and use their time well, often working outside set lesson times in a designated area within the department. Assessment is effective as an influence on future

curriculum development and lesson planning. Assessment includes students' self-assessment and, when questioned, students were well aware of teacher expectations and their own strengths and weaknesses. Teachers maintain detailed records of attainment and progress. Students are very complimentary about the level of support given to them by their teachers.

223. Leadership and management are very good. There is clear vision and very effective planning which promote high standards. The use of computers in art is satisfactory but is not a planned activity and therefore has not had sufficient impact on learning. Accommodation is satisfactory but the quality and condition of furniture are poor.

Media studies

Provision in media studies is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Practical work by students is good though work on still images is underdeveloped.
- Good leadership and management set high standards for the students.
- Marking is good and helps students to improve their work.
- Students gain a good awareness of social, cultural and moral issues.
- Resources are barely satisfactory but are well deployed.

Commentary

224. Standards in A2 examinations were well above average in 2004 and this was an improvement on the above average standards of the previous year. Results were less impressive in AS-level in 2004 with a large mixed ability group. Standards are currently above average and achievement is good, since no students study the subject before they enter the sixth form, and they make rapid progress from the beginning. Results compare very well with other subjects in the school and take-up is high. Boys and girls do equally well.
225. In Year 12 students have a good knowledge of editing techniques and how this affects the reaction of the audience. They apply this knowledge well when they are planning their own video productions. In discussions on reality TV, students are encouraged to think of moral and cultural issues. They show the ability to debate a range of opinions, giving views backed up by reference to other types of media output. Their expression is sometimes laboured but they are helped by good questions from the teacher which give them prompts to argue through their ideas more extensively. Students' folders of work reveal good understanding of a range of technical terminology in different media.
226. Students in Year 13 are articulate in debating the varied techniques used by film directors to create effects, to establish different genres and to represent characters and themes. They are more comfortable working with the moving image than the still image. Many students struggle to identify the different ways that film posters use conventional media techniques to influence an audience. Students are more confident discussing current issues in the media such as the recent debate on public service broadcasting. They use research well and are supported by very good teaching backed up by good resources and expert advice from the specialist staff.
227. The quality of teaching and learning is good. It ranges from very good teaching by the specialist staff to at least satisfactory in other lessons. Most teachers have good technical expertise to help students with their practical work. Marking is detailed, providing useful information for students so that they know their strengths and what areas they need to work on to improve. Some lessons lack a secure conclusion. They do not give students struggling with media terminology a clear idea of how to develop their understanding by providing good exemplar material.

228. Leadership and management are good. The subject has improved very well over recent years and has a high profile in the school. Teachers work well as a team. Resources are well used but in fairly short supply with such a large number of students. The monitoring of teaching and learning is largely informal but effective.

Theatre studies

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students' achievement is very good in performance and in written work.
- Examination results are above average.
- Teaching is dynamic and based on very good subject knowledge.
- Relationships are excellent and students work very hard.
- Good use is made of shared resources.

Commentary

229. Results in the 2004 examinations were above average but did not reach the very high standards of 2003. The standards of the current Year 12 students are well above average and those of the current Year 13 are above average. Most students achieve very well because of their hard work and commitment which follow very charismatic teaching.

230. Performance work is of a very high quality, especially in Year 12. Students apply their research to develop highly original and powerful representations of important themes. They plan very simple but effective set designs and synchronise dance, music and drama in convincing pieces of theatre. The planning shows very good collaboration and refinement of ideas. Students produce excellently choreographed stylistic devices, for example a ventriloquist and dummy to show manipulation of character. Such skills leave audiences entranced.

231. Written work is beautifully presented and shows how much students learn over the course by reading, watching plays and films, and working in rehearsals. They argue coherently as to what makes effective theatre. Students evaluate work in progress with a critical yet sensitive voice. The minority of males who opt for the subject perform well and achieve a very good standard. Relationships are excellent and students help even the least confident of the group to be fully included. They show concern for each other. This means that those of average ability are greatly encouraged by others with greater creative flair.

232. The quality of teaching is very good and leads to very good learning. A wide range of ideas is generated in discussion and students develop them independently, encouraged by clever prompts from the teacher. A good focus on written evaluation helps students to reflect on their progress. Teaching has clarity of purpose, brisk pace and the energy to inspire.

233. The leadership and management of this fairly recently introduced subject are very good. There is a clear vision for future development and a good analysis of the needs of the student which informs assessment procedures. The accommodation is adequate and it is well used with some thought and imagination. The subject has a high profile and plays a very important part in supporting the school's spiritual ethos.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

234. Physical education was sampled. One Year 13 lesson was observed and standards were in line with those expected. Students are enthusiastic and they respond well to good teaching.

They make significant progress in developing their understanding of the cultural differences between two countries' approaches to the development of sport.

Leisure and recreation – AVCE

235. The focus of the inspection was leisure and recreation. Physical education and travel and tourism were sampled.
236. In travel and tourism standards are average overall and the achievement of students is good, given their low starting points. Teaching and learning are good. The lesson seen, about promoting a holiday destination, was well planned and made good use of a variety of activities, including exposition, question and answer, group work and role-play. Activities encouraged the involvement of the least confident students. As a result, students are enthusiastic and work at a good pace. The tasks set made good use of examples of tourist opportunities in capital cities in other countries, helping students to have a sound understanding. The course is well led and managed.
237. In physical education standards are in line with the national average. One Year 13 lesson was observed. Students were engaged and enthusiastic. They responded well to good teaching and achieved well.

Provision in leisure and recreation is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve well as a result of good teaching.
- Work placements do not contribute sufficiently to learning.

Commentary

238. In the 2004 AVCE leisure and recreation examination, results were well above average. When account is taken of students' low GCSE grades at the start of the course this represents good achievement.
239. Overall standards seen are above average and achievement is good in relation to prior attainment. Students develop their literacy, numeracy and ICT skills well, particularly through their coursework. In Year 12 students have a good knowledge and understanding of the leisure and tourism industry. They appreciate both the nature and scale of the sports industry and changing trends in leisure activities. In Year 13 students develop their knowledge and understanding well, particularly about marketing and a range of factors affecting the development of the industry. Overall students make very good progress in developing communication skills related to realistic, vocationally related situations, although they do not experience enough practical and structured experience of the subject. Standards of written work are good, particularly in students' coursework where there are occasional good examples of the use of ICT and numeracy skills.
240. The quality of teaching overall is good but with some variation in the quality of individual lessons. Teachers have a secure knowledge of the subject and use a satisfactory range of activities in their teaching. A few opportunities are missed to give students more responsibility for their own learning and to use ICT. Lessons are well planned. The teacher engages the students in well-directed question and answer sessions, with a range of useful resources. Assessment is generally thorough and is providing enough information to help students improve.

241. Leadership and management of the course are good. There are good resources and there is effective communication between teachers. The improvement plan identifies good priorities for improvement, including extending work-based experience and increased use of ICT.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

242. Health and social care was sampled. Two lessons were seen in which students reached very high standards and achieved very well. Teaching was very good and the subject is very well led and managed. Work placements are very well managed and students have very good opportunities to develop their practical skills.

PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT AND GENERAL PROGRAMMES

243. Provision was sampled. The school provides a comprehensive programme of talks, discussions and visits. It makes good use of visiting speakers. The programme includes sessions on preparation for university, the world of work, and ethical and social issues. In the session seen, students were attentive and interested and entered into discussion maturely.

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	2
How inclusive the school is		2
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	2	2
Overall standards achieved		2
Pupils' achievement	2	2
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities (ethos)		1
Attendance	2	2
Attitudes	2	2
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	2	2
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development		2
The quality of education provided by the school		2
The quality of teaching	2	2
How well pupils learn	2	2
The quality of assessment	3	3
How well the curriculum meets pupils' needs	2	3
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities		2
Accommodation and resources	5	5
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety		3
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	2	2
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	2	2
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents		3
The quality of the school's links with the community	2	2
The school's links with other schools and colleges	2	2
The leadership and management of the school		2
The governance of the school	2	2
The leadership of the headteacher		1
The leadership of other key staff	2	3
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).