

INSPECTION REPORT

SALT GRAMMAR SCHOOL

ShIPLEY BRADFORD

LEA area: BRADFORD

Unique reference number: 107395

Headteacher: Sue Mansfield

Lead inspector: Bill Baxendale

Dates of inspection: 31st January - 4th February 2005

Inspection number: 268903

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

© Crown copyright 2005

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

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

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Comprehensive
School category: Community
Age range of students: 11-18
Gender of students: Mixed
Number on roll: 1420

School address: Higher Coach Road
Baildon
Shipley
West Yorkshire
Postcode: BD17 5RH

Telephone number: 01274 415551
Fax number: 01274 415552

Appropriate authority: The governing body
Name of chair of governors: Shirley Craven

Date of previous inspection: 2nd November 1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Salt Grammar school is a larger than average comprehensive school educating 1420 students in the 11-18 age ranges. The figure includes 220 sixth formers. This is a Specialist Mathematics and Computing College. There are substantially more boys than there are girls in Years 7-11, but girls outnumber boys in the sixth form. The students come from below average socio-economic circumstances. Their attainment on entry to Year 7 is below average; attainment on entry to the sixth form is about average. Student mobility is low. The percentage of students eligible for a free school meal is about average. The school has a bit higher than average percentage of students whose first language is believed not to be English, but none is at an early stage of learning English. The percentage identified as having special educational needs is below the national average. The percentage of students with a statement of special educational needs (moderate learning difficulties, social, emotional and behavioural difficulties, dyslexia, autistic, physical, ADHD (hyper-activity), speech, hearing or visual impairment) is broadly in line with national averages. The school benefits from extra funding through the EIC (Excellence in Cities) scheme. It operates the Duke of Edinburgh's Award and ASDAN-related schemes. The school is in phase 1 of a Building Schools for the Future Pathfinder project. Young Enterprise, Enterprise Pathfinder and an EIC tailored strand for Boys' Achievement also operate. The school won a Schools Achievement award in 2000; it holds a Sportsmark and NMN (national mentoring network) award.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
2928	W K Baxendale	Lead inspector	
19743	A Taylor	Lay inspector	
3943	D Innes	Team inspector	Physical education
			English in the sixth form
			Special educational needs
			English as an additional language
22524	S Innes	Team inspector	Design and technology
			Health and social care
8070	J Haves	Team inspector	Geography
			Citizenship
			Work-related learning
22906	B Hodgson	Team inspector	Information and communication technology
2893	J Manning	Team inspector	English
			Media studies
24887	Y Salmons	Team inspector	French
			German
			Spanish
23554	G Hedley	Team inspector	Art and design
8756	P Hanage	Team inspector	Mathematics in the sixth form
19915	P Hooton	Team inspector	History
12475	S Johnson	Team inspector	Music
10564	J Tomlinson	Team inspector	Religious education
33030	B Rickwood	Team inspector	Science
20619	J Hazlewood	Team inspector	Business studies
04720	G Carter	Team inspector	Physics
27741	G Cottam	Team inspector	Mathematics

The inspection contractor was:

Eclipse Education (UK) Limited
 14 Enterprise House
 Kingsway
 Team Valley
 Gateshead
 NE11 0SR

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

REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT	4
PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE MAIN INSPECTION FINDINGS	
STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS	8
Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses	
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	
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	23
WORK-RELATED LEARNING	27
PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN AREAS OF LEARNING, SUBJECTS AND COURSES	28
SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGE 3 AND 4	
SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM	
PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS	56

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

Salt Grammar school is an effective school and specialist mathematics and computing college in which standards are rising. There is a way to go, but the school has an outstandingly clear sense of purpose and all the right measures are in place for all students to keep on doing well. Leadership and governance are very good. Parents and students are supportive of a school that provides a good quality of education, has a cost-effective sixth form and provides good value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Very strong teamwork, nurtured by very good leadership is driving this school forward.
- Boys' literacy standards let them down, so they underachieve compared with girls; higher attainers in general also underachieve.
- Provision in mathematics, German, health and social care and media studies is very good.
- The very imaginative Years 10 and 11 curriculum is designed to give everyone a fair chance, but insufficient time is allocation to ICT (information and communication technology).
- Very good action based on students' performance data raises standards.
- Poor accommodation hinders learning.
- Students get very good support and guidance, but some of that given to those with special educational needs is not precise enough.
- Partnerships with the community and colleges benefit the quality of education very strongly.

Improvements since the previous inspection are difficult to specify since the school's character changed very substantially after amalgamation. However, GCSE results have improved: they are the highest in the school's history. The much-improved curriculum is well designed to give everyone a very fair chance. Dynamic, wise, new leadership is creating very effective systems to make sure standards rise and remain high. The school's ethos for learning is good. From this, inspectors suggest good improvements, but accommodation has got worse.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Achievement is good. Students achieve well: they reach about average standards by the end of Year 9 from below average starts in Year 7. Girls do very well in English, but boys do not; their writing remains weaker. Overall, girls and boys achieve well. In mathematics, they calculate, measure, draw and use graphs well enough to help them make very good progress, gaining skills they transfer to other subjects. Compared with similar schools, Year 9 mathematics results were, in 2004, well above average, those in English were about average and in science they were below (boys' writing was the weakness; the school is doing all it can to help them improve).

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

Key: A - well above average; B – above average; C – average; D – below average; E – well below average – E in the lowest 5 percent nationally.*

For Year 11, similar schools are those whose students attained similarly at the end of Year 9.

Although GCSE results dipped in 2002, quick action produced big improvements. Students achieve well in Years 10 and 11. They do particularly well in mathematics, German, geography, history, health and social care, physics, chemistry and biology. At the same time the highest attainers tend to underachieve because they are not stretched enough. Learning support assistants contribute well to students' learning, but some do not record progress students with special educational needs make towards their sometimes-imprecise targets. However, these same students and those from ethnic minorities also achieve well. Special attention paid to raising boys' standards has improved achievement by both genders, but girls are racing ahead. Students' attitudes, values and other personal qualities are good. **Their personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social, and cultural development, is good.**

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education is good. Students' good overall achievements stem from consistently **good teaching** that leads to **good learning**, for most students. The school has made a good response to a national initiative to improve learning for all students. Students, especially boys, learn and achieve best through hands-on experiences, which they get in, among other subjects, mathematics, German, music and health and social care, where teaching and learning are very good. Misbehaviour sometimes undermines learning, especially in Years 8 and 9. Teaching does not always challenge the highest attainers enough. Assessment is good; performance is analysed very closely, with action taken to help students do better. However, inconsistent marking of written work means that students are not always told clearly enough how to do better.

The curriculum is good overall. Broad and balanced, it meets all statutory requirements. Collaboration with other providers extends the range of vocational studies and leads to a very good curriculum in Years 10 and 11. This creates a clear pathway to a good selection of courses post-16; however, at present, there are too few suitable options for low attaining students. Guidance and advice are also very good: they help students to make suitable choices. Settling-in arrangements are very good. The school responds very well to students' views.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are very good. First class leadership by a new headteacher has established increasingly effective teams that are pulling together very well. Meticulous analysis of performance, which identifies very quickly where changes or extra help are needed, heads up rising standards. Action planning and very good training programmes focus only on better teaching and learning: these are good, leading to students' good achievement. Management is good. The school is very well run. Governance is very good. Governors hold the school closely to account and play key parts in setting its excellent clarity of purpose. All statutory requirements are met, although the time for teaching ICT is short. Partnerships with the community and other institutions are very good.

PARENTS' AND STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents and students have very good views of the school. Parents feel very easy about approaching a well-led school that gets their child to do well because of the good teaching and high expectations, although inspectors find room for improvement with higher attainers. Many students expressed concern about misbehaviour and to an extent bullying in their returns, but they were much less direct in conversations with inspectors who do, however, note a need for continuing vigilance. Students emphasised friendliness, teaching, encouragement, advice and extra-curricular activity as strong points of the school. Many deplored the accommodation and lunchtime arrangements.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Increase further teachers' expectations of the quality of work boys produce, especially in literacy.
- Place greater demands on those identified as gifted and talented.
- Introduce more specific improvement targets for students with special educational needs.
- Continue to make every effort to get accommodation provided that helps learning.
- Expand further the time given for studying ICT in Years 10 and 11.

THE SIXTH FORM AT SALT GRAMMAR SCHOOL

This is an above average size sixth form with 202 students. The school collaborates with two nearby schools and local colleges of further education in providing A/S, A-level and GNVQ and some GCSE re-sits.

OVERALL EVALUATION

The **overall effectiveness of the sixth form is good**. This sixth form offers a good range of courses for most students both in the school and also in collaboration with nearby schools and colleges. Examination results are average but students are currently achieving well in most subjects. They do particularly well in media studies and in health and social care. Nearly all students gain at least an E grade, but the proportion of A and B grades is low. The quality of teaching is good with the best practice seen in German, physics and health and social care. Most students work hard and relationships at all levels are very good. The accommodation is very cramped and does not contribute to an atmosphere in which productive learning can take place. The library is often used for lessons and is not accessible for private study. Leadership and management of the sixth form are good. The major strength is the very good support given by the staff and the good processes for assessment, which help students to plan measures for their improvement. There has been satisfactory improvement since the previous inspection.

The main strengths and weaknesses are:

- There are very good standards in media studies, health and social care and German but in some other subjects they are not good enough.
- Most students make good progress in their courses and learn well in lessons, but there are weaknesses in business studies and history.
- Very good links with other schools and colleges result in a broad and relevant curriculum
- The accommodation is poor.
- There are too few courses for the lowest attainers.

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. Nine subjects in the sixth form were inspected and the others sampled. Not all subjects in the sixth form were inspected.

Curriculum area	Evaluation
English, languages and communication	Good. Students are well motivated and respond positively to good teaching so that they attain good standards.
German	Very good. Standards are rising because of the very good teaching now taking place. There is good guidance to students to help them prepare well for examinations and they show very good attitudes to the work.
History	Unsatisfactory. Standards are well below average because of inadequate monitoring. There are inconsistencies in teaching and assessment prejudicing the development of students' efficiency and independence as learners. Achievement is satisfactory because students show good commitment but lack confidence in extended speaking.
Mathematics	Very good. Students achieve well as a result of good teaching and positive attitudes to learning.
Physics	Very good. Standards are above average and students achieve very well. The quality of teaching and learning is very good, as are the leadership and management.
Health and social care	Very good. Students achieve very well because of the high quality of teaching and learning. Very good leadership promotes good links with local

	agencies and adds to the effectiveness of the course.
Art and design	Good. Consistently high standards are the result of a full commitment to hard work by students and teachers. Practical work is very good and students achieve very well.
Media studies	Very good. Because the students are highly committed and work well as teams, they reach very high standards, which are among the best in the school. More students obtain higher A-level grades in this subject than in any other.
Business education	Satisfactory. Students' positive attitudes lead to satisfactory achievement, but they do not always receive sufficient challenge in the lessons.

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

There is good advice and support for sixth form students. They receive clear guidance on how to judge their own progress and the system for reviews is regular. Tutors, particularly the head of sixth form, are very supportive, and good relationships ensure that all students are confident enough to ask for help when required. The induction programme is comprehensive. Students have good opportunities for work experience and residential visits to universities give them a good insight into future academic possibilities. Students with special educational needs achieve very well because they are treated with sensitivity and because they are fully integrated into the sixth form.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE SIXTH FORM

The leadership and management of the sixth form are good. Students appreciate the warm and friendly atmosphere, which encourages them to work hard. The management team and tutors have created a community spirit that shows in the work that many students undertake on behalf of younger students. Specific development needs for the sixth form are not always clearly articulated and rely on the whole school improvement plan to point the way forward. This is an area for development. The sixth form gives good value for money.

STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Most students are refreshingly articulate and confident in their school. They respond well to being treated as responsible adults and in return are polite and hard working; they enjoy learning. They commend the commitment of their teachers but deplore the frequent silliness and lack of respect shown by some students in Years 7 and 8. They try to play a full part in the school by acting as mentors for younger students. Attendance is good, but they acknowledge punctuality is not always as good. They are fully consulted by the senior management team whom they regard as open and clear-minded and they are involved in the life of the school with good representation on the school's council and the governing body. They are not happy with the size and quality of the buildings or lack of access to the library.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

Achievement is good: students leave with overall average standards in a very wide range of subjects and vocational courses. New leadership quickly got the school back on the ball after a big dip in GCSE results in 2002: those in 2003 and 2004 were the best in its history. The achievement of students with special educational needs is good, but the most able could do better. Girls do much better than do boys and the gap is widening; it is now above that found nationally. Boys' writing lets them down. Pupils from ethnic minorities achieve well.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve well, but girls do better because boys' writing lets them down.
- Standards are rising because of improved monitoring.
- Higher attainers are not challenged enough.
- Students do particularly well in mathematics, German, geography, history, physical education, health and social care and separate sciences.

Commentary

1 From below average standards as 11 year-olds, students reach average ones in national tests at the end of Year 9. They go on to obtain GCSE results that are also about average. In this process, the value added to their education is good. After a big decline in 2002, standards are rising and appear set to continue to do so because the school has put in place effective systems, for example action on identified need and rigorous checking of teaching quality, to make them do so.

2 Students' successes lie not only in national test and GCSE examinations, but also in numerous vocational courses shared with other providers; some of them do not carry accreditation that counts under current arrangements for comparisons with other schools. GCSE capped average point scores show as about average against similar schools, but they do not give a full picture. About one-fifth of the Year 10 or 11 students do well in such vocational courses which keep some of them from falling out of the system.

3 Inspection evidence bears out school data that show attainment in English to be lower than in mathematics and science at the start of Year 7. Literacy weaknesses are a severe challenge. For example, over one-quarter of the current Year 9 was a full grade or more below expectation in English on starting the school. Such students find it hard to cope with the secondary curriculum without a lot of extra help.

4 The school's very detailed analyses of attainment, funded through its Specialist School allocations, allow it to select target groups in greatest need. It uses the data very effectively to give those identified extra help, for example, students at Level 3 in mathematics. The curriculum is carefully designed to permit extra lessons in English, mathematics and science, where required. As a result, standards rise at a faster rate than would be expected between Year 7 and Year 9. Results in 2004 national tests for 14 year-olds were about average, although there was room for improvement in science.

5 Trends in the pattern of results in national tests for 14 year-olds are upwards. Improvements over time are substantial in English, but those in science are going the wrong way, because of students' weaknesses in writing on the subject. Whilst targets were exceeded in mathematics and almost hit in English, those for science were missed by some distance. However, the overall value added measure was well up to national averages and students from ethnic minorities did as well as the rest. The average point score in 2004 put the school above average compared with all schools nationally and the mathematics results were in the top quartile (in the top 5 per cent compared with similar schools). Results, as a whole, were well above those of schools in similar contexts. However, the gender gap increased in 2004, in spite of the school's best efforts.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	33.5 (34.5)	N/A (33.4)
Mathematics	36.2 (35.3)	N/A (35.4)
Science	31.8 (32.4)	N/A (33.6)

There were 238 students in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

6 Achievement is good in Years 7-9. It is very good in mathematics, as a result of consistently good teaching; a well-planned curriculum designed to cater for all abilities; students' positive attitudes and a climate of high expectation and enjoyment in success. Students reach similar standards across all aspects of the subject; higher attainers grasp ideas easily and lower attainers make progress from working on concrete, hands-on experiences. All students achieve very well and there are no issues with language for students from ethnic minorities. All students achieve well in English at this stage. Big improvements occur in speaking and listening and there are some in reading for meaning, although reading aloud remains shaky. There are some good, detailed answers in literature but inaccuracies in writing. Boys are good orally, but too many fail to get rid of weaknesses in writing. Students' ability to handle data, plan and carry out investigations and solve problems in line with national expectations shows good achievement in science, with boys doing as well as girls.

7 As they often start from well below expected standards, students achieve well in most other subjects. Achievement is very good in German. Students write confidently and speak with good accents. In art and design, students achieve well with a good amount of detail in using different two and three-dimensional materials.

8 Achievement is also good in Years 10 and 11. The same very good pattern continues in mathematics, so that standards rise to above average. Higher attainers' strengths are in algebra with an ability to put different parts together to apply to new questions. Lower attainers' competence in algebra is rudimentary, but they develop other basic skills adequately. Achievement is satisfactory overall in English where girls continue to outshine boys. Higher attainers produce some imaginative writing. However, for too many, spelling and punctuation are insecure and their work is sometimes incomplete and poorly presented. Achievement is satisfactory in science, with the same strengths continuing from Years 7-9. Weaknesses in oral work and writing at length spoil achievement for some.

9 Students also achieve well because they enjoy subjects they have chosen. Achievement is excellent in German and very good in other languages. Quite remarkably, boys make equally excellent progress as girls in German because courses are interesting,

teaching is very good and students get a lot of opportunities to use ICT to help learning. At this stage, boys do as well as girls in history because they like the work: they judge events according to cause and consequence well.

10 Much development work has been directed at boys, lower attainers and students with special educational needs. Students with special educational needs make good progress because the school makes good provision for them. In 2004, students on the special educational needs register gained an average of eight passes at GCSE which far exceeded reasonable expectation for many of them based upon their attainment as assessed on entry to the school. Whilst most other students do well in their pursuit of agreed targets, at the other end of the scale, the performance of gifted and talented students is unsatisfactory in Years 10 and 11 especially. Reasons for this are discussed in section 5 below.

11 Efforts to help boys to catch up have been in many ways successful, but there is a long way to go. Creating work suited to gender is paying off. Boys' overall achievement is good and their average GCSE point scores have improved substantially over the last 2 years. At the same time, girls' standards have also shot up; perversely, the gap between boys and girls is now greater than the national one. Boys do better in subjects that give them hands-on experiences and the chance to learn through using what they see as exciting technology such as inter-active whiteboards. Increasing use of ICT is having a clear impact on learning, not only of boys. The school's specialist status is helping in this respect, as boys' and girls' standards in mathematics and ICT are neck and neck. However, it is only in physical education where boys outperform girls.

12 Differences in literacy competence between boys and girls are the major concern. They are stark in Years 7-9. The school's efforts, including the imaginative curriculum, overcome it, to an extent, in Years 10 and 11. Generally, boys reach substantially lower standards in subjects that require a depth of understanding through reading for meaning and of thought through written work. Differences in performance remain stubbornly wide in English, history, geography and religious education. Boys' literacy weaknesses, especially writing, in English and these other subjects arise from immaturity and ill preparedness to work hard or to think things out themselves. As a result, girls outperform them to a worrying degree. In the same vein, boys' writing about science has let them down in national tests. Inspection evidence suggests some improvements but scope for greater progress through to Year 11.

13 GCSE result trends over time are in the right direction. Suitably demanding targets have been set and just about met. Average point scores have been above the national average for the past 2 years; the first time this has happened in the school's history. It coincides with new leadership's direction of a school that now has the capacity to go on doing well. Girls are doing much better than girls nationally, but boys are teetering about average. The improvements arise from target groups being watched carefully and given extra help and modified timetables. Subjects in which over two-thirds of the entry obtained a higher grade, A*-C, were physics, chemistry and biology (these are taken only by the highest attainers), German, geography, history, physical education and health and social care. Comparative under-performance, with about or less than one-third obtaining higher grades occurred in graphics, art and design, design, food technology, ICT GCSE and Spanish.

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

	School results	National results
--	----------------	------------------

Percentage of students gaining 5 or more A*-C grades	54.6 (54)	52 (52)
Percentage of students gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	92 (86)	89 (88)
Percentage of students gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	96 (95)	96 (96)
Average point score per pupil (best eight subjects)	282.0 (34.1)	282.8 (34.7)

There were 241 students in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

14 Of great significance was the success of very nearly all the boys in obtaining at least 1 GCSE qualification and bucking the pattern of girls uniform supremacy! Results obtained in vocational courses, including GNVQ examinations in ICT where students did very well, also contributed to improvements as students did well in them. Students identified as gifted and talented achieve satisfactorily overall, but at GCSE their results are unsatisfactory, as only one-fifth, albeit a bit higher than in 2003, reached their targets in the 2004 examination round. However, successes of teams and individuals at local, county and national levels illustrate the high standards achieved by talented students and the good levels of liaison the school has with outside clubs and organisations.

Sixth form

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The 2004 A-level results were good considering the students' low GCSE scores.
- Pass rates are satisfactory, but there are too few A/B grades at A-level and VCE.
- Students do not get enough clues as to how to score high marks in some subjects.
- Girls do better than do boys in the sixth form.
- Some students find it hard to do well because their courses fail to suit their needs.

Commentary

15 Students' attainment on entry to the sixth form is about average. The school sets generous entry qualifications to post-16 courses, although there are too few courses specifically for lower attainers.

16 Results at the end of A-level courses were also very close to average in 2003 and 2004. As the 2004 students had scored low GCSE pass rates two years earlier, an average performance at this level has clear merit, although the numbers involved fell too.

17 The need to stretch higher attainers even more shows clearly in the sixth form. A-level results regularly stand up very well up to national averages for A-E grade pass rates. For instance in 2004, there were no failures in 17 out of the 21 subjects that produced candidates. Slippage shows in the comparison of average point scores: these suffer because the students do not obtain as many higher grades, A/B, as those in most other schools.

18 Average A-level point scores were well above average in chemistry, media studies, geography and religious education. They were well below average in history, physics, economics, English literature, design and technology and general studies: there is scope for improvements. Inspection suggests that the impetus given to teaching and learning is having a positive effect and that achievement is improving.

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	92.5 (92.0)	92.3 (92.3)
Percentage of entries gaining A-B grades	23.8 (24.8)	36.2 (35.6)
Average point score per pupil	258.8 (266.0)	265.2 (258.2)

There were 60 students in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

19 Girls do better than boys. Girls' average point scores are above average, whilst those of boys are stubbornly below. A lack of urgency is apparent among some boys in Year 12 business studies. This contrasts with health and social care where, the students, mainly girls, apply themselves very well to a new subject and are able to talk about their work and to write well enough to show they know enough about it.

20 Whilst students express themselves well orally and most write convincingly, the residue of weak literacy skills still shows to an extent at this level, as some need close guidance from their teachers in written essays. In history, for example, the production of short or longer pieces of written work is unsatisfactory because the teaching does not help

the students get inside the examiner's mind in his/her search for demonstrated history skills. Some weaknesses in writing penalise students' achievement in art and design. Work in media studies is in direct contrast: practical work; wide, conclusive research and evaluations that are well supported by teachers produce well above average written work and results, with a very high proportion of A/B passes, showing the students' abilities to do well. The school's concern with raising standards is seen in some general studies teaching where the students criticised each other's essay topics against examination criteria, so developing successful writing skills.

21 Achievement is good in English. Students quickly begin to understand writers' techniques and are comfortable exploring ideas. Some produce creative writing that is outstanding and their analysis of the work of other writers is good. Sometimes they are a bit hesitant in using technical terms. In mathematics, students achieve well; higher attainers are very competent mathematicians, but some lower attainers tend to founder. Some are clearly misplaced on the courses offered, showing the need to expand provision better to cater for the range of ability entering the sixth form. A combination of very good teaching and determination to improve are producing achievement that outstrips past below par physics results.

22 There is good provision for developing key skills among students who use ICT and the cramped library resources well to research and present their work: this raises their standards in communicating information well. Similarly, good competence in mathematics allows students to improve achievement in business studies and science courses, especially. The personal, social, moral education course has a package of activities dedicated to developing key skills. Students work very well together.

23 Recruitment to A/S level courses is satisfactory; the association with other schools helps in subjects that attract fewer candidates, so the students have good choices. Retention is also satisfactory, although the numbers going on to A-level are low in languages. The school does not use the Advanced Extension awards.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Students' attitudes are good and overall, their behaviour is satisfactory. Their personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social, and cultural development, is good. The attendance rate is rising and is satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Older students have better attitudes to learning than younger ones.
- There is still work to do on improving behaviour, particularly in Years 8 and 9, but there are improvements.
- Students have a very good appreciation of cultural tradition.
- The school has very good procedures for encouraging attendance and checking absences.
- Fixed-term exclusions are high.

Commentary

24 Students' attitudes and behaviour are improving. Currently, older students have better attitudes than younger ones. A main reason is because the curriculum for older students is better adapted to meet learning needs. When older students are in lessons, they actually feel they are learning something they value. An impressive number of students volunteer to help others. As peer mentors, guiding their counterparts through various difficulties associated with schoolwork, they show real dedication and a strong sense of responsibility.

25 Younger students often lack the maturity you would expect from them, especially in Year 8 and, to a lesser extent in Year 9. There is often low level, annoying disturbance in lessons, even when the lesson has the potential to be exciting, for instance, when using the interactive whiteboard in history. There is a general reluctance from students to push themselves to the limits, for example, when writing, many will not do more than a page. Attitudes are often casual and 'laid back'.

26 Behaviour is satisfactory. It is better for older students than for younger ones. The impact of the poor accommodation on behaviour should not be underestimated. Cramped conditions,

dowdy airless classrooms, dining conditions that few would tolerate outside education, little space for socialising. These conditions really push students to the limit and it is no surprise that sometimes, they rebel. Girl's attitudes and behaviour are better than those of boys, although the school has some very naughty girls.

27 The school takes any incidents of bullying seriously; there are set procedures, which students agree resolve situations, once staff becomes alerted to them. However, some students said they would like to know more about what exactly happens once they contact staff for help. They thought that if the school could demonstrate successes, they would feel more confident in reporting bullying. A few said they did not report bullying because of fear of retribution, be it inside or outside of school.

Attendance

28 The school is investing considerable time and expertise in working to improve attendance and there are some very good systems in place. Higher attendance rates are benefits of this investment. The last reported figure was in line with the national average and is satisfactory. More recent figures show a continued improvement. The authorised absence figure remains higher than the national average. Despite the schools' hard work, a significant minority of parents do not feel it is important to let the school know why their children are absent. Roughly, half of one per cent of unauthorised absences are because the school will not accept the reason parents have provided. This is quite justified.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (91.8%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	5.9	School data	2.3
National data	7.0	National data	1.1

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

29 Punctuality has improved, since being raised as a weakness in a 2002 HMI inspection report. Although a hard core of students are sometimes late, especially in the sixth form, and occasionally buses are delayed, most are punctual. The school really insists on punctuality and has very good systems in place to pursue latecomers.

Exclusions

30 Within the constraints of a building that fails on most counts the school does what it can in making effective provision for students with behavioural and emotional problems and for those at risk of or returning from exclusion. The school has no space to provide appropriately for such students. The specialised behaviour support unit, housed in what can only be described as a 'kitchenette', can only accommodate five students at most. Numbers needing this kind of specialised support far exceed capacity and hence the school is obliged to exclude, despite being totally against its ethos of wanting to provide for all.

31 Permanent exclusions are very rare. Fixed-term exclusions remain stubbornly high despite the school's good work with students who have extremely challenging behaviour. Many exclusions are for younger students, especially those in Year 9, and often repeat offences. Recently, the school has taken in a higher number of students excluded from other schools, as well as a number coping with extremes of difficulty in their life. This has had a knock on effect on figures.

Ethnic background of students**Exclusions in the last school year**

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of students on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	1301	235	0
White – Irish	3	0	0
White – any other White background	6	1	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	16	8	0
Mixed – White and Black African	1	1	0
Mixed – White and Asian	2	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	3	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Indian	11	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani	47	3	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	7	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	2	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	2	0	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	1	0	0
Chinese	2	0	0
Any other ethnic group	3	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	13	0	0

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

32 The school's audit of opportunities for students' personal development indicates how deeply it cares about education of the whole person in its widest sense. Photographic displays in corridors and notices about current ventures and regular clubs or performing groups testify to the lively participation, social responsibility and commitment of staff and students.

33 The development of respect for feelings, values and beliefs of others is overall satisfactory with many strong examples of imaginative provision. It is a feature of most lessons where work in groups and pairs engages students in collaborative planning, reaching agreement and presenting work. Sometimes immature behaviour of younger students compromises the learning of others.

34 Integral to lessons in music, design and technology and modern foreign languages is the importance of listening to, valuing and celebrating the success of others. A Year 9 camp is a particular challenge in learning to live amicably with others. Also important for understanding the views of others are opportunities to participate on the very effective school council, Bradford Youth Parliament, staff/student committee, or as student governors or mentors. Work-related studies and alternative curricula take students into unfamiliar situations where they must adapt to people and ways of operating. Health and social care offers genuine challenges to older students that demand great sensitivity.

35 Students' sense of responsibility towards the community at large is good and often they work alongside adults. Fundraising 'readathons' for cancer care, a safety day for primary schools, Duke of Edinburgh Award projects, participation in orchestral, choral and other music groups, team and individual sports all give students a positive profile in the locality.

36 Students' ability to distinguish right from wrong is good. In many subjects, students confront a range of views about current moral issues; including stem cell research in science; data protection in ICT; life and death issues in religious education. Teachers have high expectations about behaviour and targets form part of lesson objectives.

37 Students' self-knowledge and spiritual awareness are good. Feelings of joy, wonder, pride in achievement are evident across the curriculum: exploiting ICT in maths, realising an idea in dance, drama or design and technology, the warmth of teamwork for a school production, and planning the school prom. Particularly impressive was the arts collaboration with a special school involving students in photography, video-conferencing, texting poetry and e-mailing work to an artist in America. Celebrating such achievement is central to the school philosophy.

38 Observation of Holocaust Day through a PowerPoint history presentation reminded all students of the suffering of Jews and other minorities.

39 Conventional assemblies and "Thought for the Day" are satisfactory. The latter vary in quality as a means of encouraging spiritual reflection and a thoughtful start to the day, because they depend on individual teachers' personal commitment, but inspectors find that, overall, they meet requirements.

40 Students' appreciation of their own and others' cultural traditions is very good, realised in projects on African culture in design and technology, in Art Gallery visits, in understanding other faiths in religious education, or in composing Tala and World Music. Modern foreign languages make a valuable contribution. Students have a choice of three languages up to Year 9 and most do two; displays portray aspects of French, Spanish and German culture and groups of students visit European countries for sporting and musical links.

41 True to its tradition of responding to its community, the school sought the views of its multi-ethnic students last year and keeps a log of racially motivated incidents. A multi-cultural day offered workshops on African Caribbean culture and dance, Islamic Art, and the culture of Roma and travelling people; this is a strong feature characterised by the teacher who commented that "our local culture *is* multi-ethnic."

Sixth form

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students have very good attitudes to learning.
- Students have a strong presence and participation in school life.

Commentary

42 Students develop very well personally in the sixth form. Their attitudes to learning are very good. This is because they take full advantage of the opportunities for them to participate in activities beyond the classroom. They show initiative in raising money for others less fortunate than themselves and serve their local community well by sitting on local committees. They participate in discussions on how to improve aspects of school life and two of their number serve as observers on the governing body. Students have a good understanding of moral issues on a local and global scale and they socialise very well in lessons and in the larger life of the school. The nature of the school means that they are

frequently in contact with younger students and they act as very good role models by their positive attitudes to each other and to work. Subjects such as general studies, history, English, media and business studies give them a good understanding of cultural diversity. Sixth formers make lively contributions to the very influential school council. They provide very good role models to younger members and carry the council's decisions effectively to governors, raising the voice students have very well.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The school provides a good quality of education. Students' good achievement and similar attitudes are very closely related to the good quality of teaching that helps them to learn well. Students benefit from a good, imaginative curriculum and those with special educational needs enjoy good provision. Guidance on raising standards and making choices is very good.

Teaching and learning

Teaching is good. Learning is good. Assessment is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning are better in Years 10 and 11 than in Years 7-9.
- The school makes very good use of data from students' examination and test results to set new targets.
- Teaching and learning are best in subjects where the students get most 'hands-on' experiences.
- Provision within lessons does not make enough demands on gifted and talented students.

Commentary

43 A strong steer from leadership and an imaginative curriculum, especially in Years 10 and 11 form the very promising conditions for further improving what is already good teaching and learning quality. Scrutinised written work and analyses of inspected lessons reveal how quality improves as the students move through the school. There is further scope for progress, particularly in the ways work is devised to stretch students of differing abilities and attainment.

44 Expectations are high. Checks on teaching quality, training in techniques and data analysis are pushing standards up. However, teaching and learning are not quite as good as they were reported at the previous inspection, although the alterations to the nature of the school make direct comparisons insecure.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 187 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
4 (2%)	52 (28%)	74 (40%)	49 (26%)	7 (4%)	1 (0.5 %)	0 (0%)

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

45 Training programmes to improve the quality of learning, based upon the national strategy, are starting to bear fruit. Most lessons now have clearly defined stages, but the presentation of what is to be learned is, on occasion, shallow. There is also scope for greater exploration throughout some lessons of how the class is doing and, at the end, in finding out just what has been learned. Homework makes a good contribution to reinforcing learning throughout the school.

46 Continuing attention to improving the quality of learning can be seen in the jobs of new senior appointments, for example with responsibility for the curriculum and for teaching and learning. These are starting to be effective. The frequency (now three times per year for all teachers) and the rigour of leadership's checking on teaching quality are growing; this is good practice. It is by these means that staff and governors report with confidence the effectiveness of training and recognise successes. Leaders also show themselves to be models of good practice by teaching some of the more difficult classes: a job they do very well. Best practice is filmed (not without difficulty) and techniques shared. There is scope for expansion: an anticipated teaching and learning development group has not yet formed.

47 Satisfactory teaching in Years 7-9 produces, nonetheless, good achievement. In these years, strong features are: teachers' good knowledge of their subject, planning, use of resources and of teaching assistants. The promotion of equal opportunity, the expectations and challenge, use of time and insistence on standards of behaviour are satisfactory. In history and religious education, there is some exciting work in pairs where students explore new information and report findings to the class. Teaching's effectiveness is, however, sometimes tempered by having to deal with some immature students, mainly boys in Years 8 and 9. Quite frequent challenging behaviour puts teachers on their mettle; most cope magnificently, showing often remarkable resilience in dealing with it. Not all are equally successful and, as a result, the learning not only of the miscreants, but that of others, suffers. An unfortunate side effect is unwonted praise, for example in geography, given for mediocre work.

48 A main reason why learning is no more than satisfactory overall at this stage is the lackadaisical attitude too many boys bring to their studies. In English, for example, they are happy with brief answers, preferring to joke rather than reflect on what they are saying and their writing lacks commitment, despite the teachers' valiant attempts to provide interesting diets. Students do acquire skills and understanding well, so their standards rise from below average as 11 year-olds to more or less average by the end of Year 9. They could do even better if their application and capacity to work without hindering others matched the teachers' efforts to help them and their innate capacity to gain knowledge.

49 Teaching and learning are good in Years 10 and 11. The imaginative curriculum gives many students the chance to study vocational subjects in situations where they have full hands-on experiences. The main benefits to students are in their now good application and productivity and their willingness to work together or individually without affecting others adversely. These important attributes go on improving: they are very good by the sixth form. Well established working routines are typical of nearly all mathematics teaching and some very good English teaching creates mutual trust, for example making lower attainers feel at home with difficult work on Shakespeare. Variety, including video clips to keep interest, and good, searching questions got boys and girls trying equally hard. Other good examples are urgency and pace in the best art teaching, the development of individual thought in media studies and close attention to students' work in music. The best science teaching had good pace with time limits set for the completion of work into which students threw themselves very willingly. On the other hand, students often did not get enough speaking or extended writing practice in this subject.

50 Overall, the quality of teaching and learning is best in German; much is also very good in mathematics, health and social care and music. The direct correlation between practical learning and standards is clearly revealed in these subjects. The students are actively engaged in learning, often through very imaginative use of computer-assisted whiteboards that fires imaginations and students' desires to learn. Teaching and learning are also uniformly good in other subjects such as music, ICT, art and design, physical education, dance and design and technology that have a strong practical content. It is mainly in these subjects that boys and girls do more or less as well as each other. The part played by ICT in this process is good.

51 Younger students with special educational needs are only now and then withdrawn for special help with basic skills of reading, writing and arithmetic, so they stay in touch with work being done by classmates. In lessons, where needed, they are usually helped well by learning support assistants who understand their difficulties. Teachers have good information about individuals and try to use it well. They would be better helped if the targets set for students in their individual education plans were more clearly stated.

Reviews of some students' progress are less frequent than expected by the revised code of practice. Teachers show good understanding and sensitivity in their management of and support for students with specific learning and medical problems.

52 Sometimes, teaching does not extend the highest attainers well enough. Inspectors have sympathy with representatives of these students who said that, in contrast to some of the extra-curricular activities they took part in, they were not stretched enough in lessons. Some very good practice is evident in mathematics where most work is carefully structured to challenge each individual, but there are hiccoughs: sometimes the highest attainers are not stretched enough. They are often pushed to try hard in science lessons but, occasionally, the pace is too leisurely and teachers do not ask 'how' and 'why' regularly enough of these students. In English lessons in Years 10 and 11, potentially highly creative writers are sometimes confined by teachers' emphasis on structure. Younger students often enjoy demanding oral work in German but less frequently in French and Spanish. They have too few opportunities for discussion in history. On the other hand in media studies, when questioning is challenging and teachers refuse to accept superficial answers, students' answers show good understanding.

53 Assessment is good. The school's impeccable use of data to set targets and to establish need from how students perform is the core of this good provision. The school and students make good decisions on what is best for individuals and groups of students. Improved GCSE results stem from monitoring and tracking performance throughout Year 11. Staff reacted with a mixture of revised study programmes, extra revision, intensive study and referrals to keep students on track.

54 Some very good assessment practice is found in design and technology and in modern foreign languages where students are made fully aware of how they are doing, recording their progress and setting themselves targets, but, in common with most other subjects, marking is still inconsistent. In most other subjects, assessments in class and the marking of written work are satisfactory: in the pursuit of better quality there is room for a wider application, particularly in Years 7-9, of the ways marking tells students not only how they have done, but how they might do better.

Sixth form

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Sixth formers have a very good capacity to work on their own and with their peers.
- Teaching and learning are very good in German, physics and health and social care.
- History teaching fails to get the students to research and to talk enough.

Commentary

55 The quality of teaching is good with the best examples coming in German, physics and health and social care. Excellent subject knowledge and a fluent use of the taught language add to the effectiveness of German lessons because it helps students to develop greater confidence in speaking. Good use of local agencies and resources, which helps students to undertake research, aids progress in health and social care. In physics students are challenged to think for themselves and to apply their knowledge incrementally. The best teaching is aided by very good relationships resulting in a high level of commitment, as in media studies and dance.

56 Learning is also good. Students collaborate well and respond enthusiastically to, for example, good open-ended questioning in English; this encourages them to think for themselves especially when supplementary points are raised for further discussion. Lively exchanges using a variety of methods energise students in mathematics and they respond very well to the rapid pace. Students achieve less well when the demands are under estimated as in business studies or over estimated as in art and design. Some teaching in history does not give students enough chance to develop independent learning because they are not involved actively enough. For instance, the range of research work is too narrow and teaching is too often based on the teacher's strengths as a raconteur, rather than getting thoughts and opinions from the students, for example, by asking how or why more frequently.

57 Good assessment procedures in all subjects raise standards. Work is marked well, with constructive comments on how to improve. Coupling this with tutorials, the students are well aware of how they are doing and what they need to do to raise their game.

The curriculum

Curriculum provision is good. Enrichment is very good. Accommodation is poor and resources are mainly good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The curriculum and staffing are very well managed: the school has gone a very long way to giving all students an equal chance.
- Poor accommodation hinders learning.
- The very good curriculum in Years 10 and 11 caters very imaginatively for individual needs.
- The school makes very good use of its associations with organisations and other providers.
- Split classes spoil continuity in history and geography.
- How the school provides for students' entitlement in ICT is not clear enough in Years 10 and 11.

Commentary

58 This school goes a long way to tailoring its curriculum to individual needs, which is good practice. Good curricular provision is the result of adventurous, imaginative thinking, very careful use of data and increasing benefits from very good links with other local providers. Some very good, recent senior staff appointments, each one with complementary curricular responsibilities, reinforce provision. Improvements on the situation reported in the previous inspection are good and substantial.

59 The curriculum meets all statutory requirements in Years 7-9. Numerous strengths include the improvements in provision for mathematics and the adoption of the national strategy for raising standards. Importantly, there are timetabled extra sessions in English, mathematics and science to raise the standards of those who may be slipping or failing to meet their targets. In Years 7-9 students have excellent language learning opportunities. In Year 7, they choose between German, French and Spanish and in Year 8, most start a further language and some start new languages in Year 9. Partly compensating the limitations of a site with no hard surfaced recreational space, there are some good opportunities for physical development through dance and drama. Weaknesses lie in the way classes are split for the teaching of history and geography; the arrangement spoils continuity of learning.

60 Very careful consideration of students' needs has directed disproportionately high expenditure to enterprising modifications to the Years 10 and 11 curriculum, which are making significant contributions to raising standards. There are no discernible disadvantages to other years. Long-standing links with a local college and extra partnerships with other colleges and providers allow the school to devise shared vocational courses that give greater purpose to the education of students who may be in danger of falling out of the system and that broaden the possibilities for others. For example, one-third of Year 10 studies part of the time with other providers. Making very good use of the specialist schools trust, the school supervises very closely extended work experiences for some, and numerous vocational courses, (which are scheduled to continue post-16), for others. There is ample scope for further extension. Positive results can be found in, for example, the fact that nearly every student left with some GCSE certification in 2004 (very nearly all of the boys), despite the adverse effect on point scores, reduced exclusions at this age and much of the best teaching and learning in the school. In addition, there is a broad range of GCSE and GNVQ courses among which health and social care, a wide range of

modern foreign languages and separate sciences are prominent. However, the absence of a practically based science course is surprising. Although planning for ICT in Year 10 shows the school's intention to meet requirements there is, in line with its specialist status, a need for more rigorous tracking to make sure all students receive their entitlement.

61 Provision for personal, social and health education is good. Well-integrated careers education is the basis of very good preparation for the next stages of education and training. Enrichment opportunities are very good: the school provides many well-attended sporting, cultural and recreational activities. In addition, work-related activities are also very strong. By Year 9 the school is starting to make alternative provision for some students who cannot otherwise cope. These arrangements are carried through to Years 10 and 11, where the very good alternative curriculum enriches the basic curriculum particularly well.

62 Students with special educational needs in Years 10 and 11, like others, benefit from the richness and flexibility of the choice of subjects available to them. They can choose work-related courses among them the ones that offer realistic pathways for continued study post-16, or other forms of education and training. Some benefit from extra help with the organisation of coursework.

63 The school makes satisfactory extra provision for talented and gifted students. There are some effective whole school provisions such as visits, workshops and master classes and the school has plans for further extension. However, these students are not stretched sufficiently in lessons, which is a weakness. Currently, the school refers to gifted and talented students as a single but diverse group and this needs clarification.

64 Staffing arrangements are good. The school has sufficient qualified and experienced teaching and support staff to match the curriculum. Leadership's sensitive, continuing shuffling of staff to make the best of individual competencies and very good new appointments are making strong contributions to this rapidly improving school. Teaching assistants' effective support results in students with special educational needs achieving at least as well as others. Training and development of staff are very good. Performance management is very well established and effective. The school is a very well established provider of Initial Teacher Training, working productively with higher education establishments and local schools. It is well set to win Investors in People status.

65 Accommodation is poor. Narrow doorways in extensions, hastily built for amalgamation, cause great difficulties when students move around. The tired, older buildings are impractical with inhospitable, bare, narrow corridors. The accommodation for learning support is cramped and unsuitable: it cannot provide adequately for teaching, learning, counselling or discussions with parents and colleagues. In physical education, poor indoor facilities and lack of a dance studio substantially diminish students' achievement; dust is a hazard in design and technology. Additionally, many subject areas lack storage space for example in art and design, modern foreign languages, science and history. The toilets are in poor condition and the students' concerns over the poor dining conditions are fully justified.

66 Learning resources are adequate in most subjects. In music, mathematics, science, ICT, history, English and social care, good provision supports students well in their learning. In the performing arts, resources are inadequate for some parts of the course to be taught effectively. The cramped, damp library is well stocked with very good provision for history; however the lack of computers and classroom textbooks limits students' opportunities for independent learning. The school is currently exploring ways of encouraging faculties to

develop students' reading through greater use of the library, although boys do make good use of provision.

Sixth form

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is a wide range of popular academic and vocational courses.
- Confederation arrangements supplement provision well.
- There are no lower level courses offered for students unable to cope with the present curriculum.

Commentary

67 Sixth form provision is good. It carries on the collaboration with other providers found in Years 10 and 11. The school is a major partner in an effective association with partner institutions that broadens the range of subjects, both academic and vocational, on offer.

68 The good range of A-level, A/S levels and AVCE courses is the basis of what is cost-effective provision. Students think that provision is a logical step from GCSE. The sixth form curriculum is expanded by comprehensive opportunities for students to expand their key skills in ICT, numeracy and, much needed literacy. Students do, however, complain of difficulties in gaining access to computers; weight of usage does lend substance to such complaints. The provision for religious education is slightly better than reported last time but is still not strong.

69 Continuing the established pattern in Years 10 and 11, students have good opportunities for work experience. Residential visits to universities give them a good insight into future academic possibilities. Students with special educational needs achieve very well because they are treated with sensitivity and because they are fully integrated into the sixth form.

70 The enrichment programme is very good with visits to other countries in media studies and history and good use of local museums and theatres for broader cultural experiences in the performing and visual arts. Visits to local universities provide students with good preparation for life after school. The curriculum is also enriched by opportunities for students to be involved in the main life of school such as helping students with reading difficulties or acting as mentors for Year 11 students on the borderline between grade C and D. A small number of students offer coaching in various sports to Year 7 students.

71 Possibilities for further expansion are good. Whilst there is good equality of access and opportunity for most, there is a gap in lower level courses suitable for students who are unable to handle those available. The willingness of the local college of further education to collaborate in the organisation of such courses bodes well.

72 Staffing of sixth form courses is very good; staff are well qualified, with particular strengths in mathematics, German, physics and English. There is sufficient support staff to deliver the courses effectively; for example in physics, the efficient laboratory technicians support students very well in practical work.

73 Resources for sixth form courses are good. The library provides some good materials, but its over-use by classes often prevents sixth formers having ready access to reference materials.

74 Whilst separate from the rest of the school and appreciated by sixth formers as such, the accommodation is poor. It is cramped, in poor condition and unsuited to the pursuit of excellence.

Care, guidance and support

Arrangements to ensure students' care and welfare are good. Students receive very good support, advice, and guidance. The extent of the school's involvement of students in its work and development is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students receive very good pastoral support and guidance, helping them take more advantage of school and become better prepared for adult life.
- The high quality provision for students with extremes of behaviour and disaffection is only coping with the 'tip of the iceberg' because there is no more room in the school building.
- The learning mentor team makes a very significant contribution to students' educational and welfare needs.
- Students have a voice that is listened to and valued, mainly through the school council.

Commentary

75 This is a school that clearly believes in the importance of helping students to learn to the best of their ability. To this end, a substantial support staff (school nurse, home school liaison officer, behaviour support team, for example) works very effectively with teachers to promote students' interests. Relationships with external support agencies are very strong and the school makes full use of the right people (sometimes at considerable financial cost) to provide suitable support for individual students.

76 'Target groups' of students are effectively identified, say for misbehaviour or underachievement; these receive extra help. The developing use of a new computerised logging system recording a number of students' pastoral details, is proving invaluable for identifying who

needs extra help, and why. One lesson every other week is currently given over to checking students' behaviour and providing guidance. Some students needing specialised behavioural support and guidance, in which the school has expertise, have to be excluded because of deficiencies in accommodation. A shared building project to overcome the problem is planned.

77 Expertly led by the senior mentor, the learning mentor team is a real strength. It skilfully provides for those students who have a wide range of social, personal, emotional, behavioural and academic difficulties. Its presence in school (largely funded from school budget) is really helping to re-engage students with learning, helping develop their self-confidence and thus their ability to cope. The team has developed a number of innovative programmes all designed to help with specific issues, for example a personal safety programme and a programme on personal care for girls.

78 Child protection procedures are well established and the school has a good number of trained staff. The recent relatively large increase in the number of children who are looked after or in care is being accommodated well by staff. Health and safety issues are dealt with in a common sense way; as best staff can, given the insurmountable difficulties posed by the premises.

79 The school council works well. It reports directly to the governors and succeeds in making improvements, for example, to lunchtime arrangements and the type of food offered. It is currently planning events for Red Nose Day. Many of students' legitimate requests for better social and toilet facilities are currently impossible to provide, because of the restrictions of the older building.

Sixth form

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Guidance is good.
- Students have good opportunities to find out about the world they are to enter on leaving school.

Commentary

80 There is good advice and support for sixth form students. They receive clear guidance on how to judge their own progress and the system for reviews is regular. Tutors, particularly the head of sixth form, are very supportive, and good relationships ensure that all students are confident enough to ask for help when required. The induction programme is comprehensive. Students have good opportunities for work experience and residential visits to universities give them a good insight into future academic possibilities. Students with special educational needs achieve very well because they are treated with sensitivity and because they are fully integrated into the sixth form.

81 Provision for advice and support for sixth form students is good. The assessment procedures focus on how they can best regulate their own progress. They are helped by evaluating each other's contribution to lessons in general studies, using examination grade criteria to familiarise them with the systems. The careful guidance given by form tutors, which caters for all students whatever their talents and needs, is well used by most students who manage to find suitable career pathways on leaving school.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The schools links with parents are good. Relationships with the community, schools and other educational establishments, are very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Strengthening involvement typifies a school that really believes in using the community to its full advantage, as well as giving back all it can.
- The school is effectively spreading good practice in mathematics and ICT to other local schools.

Commentary

82 Parents receive regular reports on their child's progress: these meet requirements. The school is increasingly trying to involve parents in the drive for continuous improvement. A new group for parents has met several times with senior staff. Parents are currently giving their honest opinions on what they would like to see in their child's report. This information is helping the school in its push to improve the current format, ultimately leading to long-term plans enabling parents to access their child's report grades, 'on line'.

83 Parents receive a good deal of information about what is going on; this includes all relevant details on the expression of concerns and parents' rights. The newly re-launched web site gives access to a wide range of information parents might need. 'Pinch of Salt', a professionally produced newsletter, celebrates and informs; it makes an interesting read. Other newsletters complement this, as and when the need arises.

84 The schools' links with the outside world are very good. As many students need a varied curriculum to keep them motivated, the school is working hard to develop its community links to further enhance the curriculum. Its work, forging relationships with employers, local businesses and industry means that the school provides very good quality when it comes to work placements and events such as business enterprise days.

85 There are extensive links with very many organisations, large and small. They pursue the common theme of involving students in community activities or enhancing curriculum opportunities: all are benefiting students' education to a significant degree.

86 The schools' specialist college work benefits its external educational partners. There is regular input from teachers into partner primary and secondary mathematics curricula, helping with teaching, advice, and loan of resources. Primary schools share a funded ICT technician and there has been extra ICT training for primary staff. Adult learners are also benefiting from more advanced ICT courses at the local community centre, through the schools' outreach work. The uptake and interest in mathematics activities for adults has not been strong.

87 Long established relationships with local colleges are key to the schools' ability to provide a very good range of vocational courses, meeting older students' learning needs very well. There is joint work in progress and projects in the pipeline with a shared commitment to further develop more new courses, for this age group. This is a real strength, as it is key to keeping numerous students, mainly in Years 9, 10 and 11, on board and learning.

Sixth form

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Parents receive a good deal of relevant information.
- The school's very good links with other providers also benefit sixth formers.

Commentary

88 There are good links with parents of sixth formers through direct contacts and the school web site. Parents receive regular progress reports and chances to meet with staff to talk over how their child is doing. Numbers joining the sixth form are buoyant.

89 The school's very good relationships with other providers also benefit sixth formers who are able thus to gain insights into the possibilities to be found in all types of continuing education and training. Very strong links with universities provide many opportunities for consultation and residential study to help students make choices. Contributions to personal development arise from work placements and other opportunities to expand their horizons through contacts with the community. Very close collaboration with local colleges has expanded the range of courses available and discussions are well ahead to take such provision further, to the potential benefit of lower attaining students who are comparatively under-served.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are very good. Leadership by the headteacher is very good and management is good. Leadership by other key staff is also very good. Governance is very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The headteacher provides vision, insight and the expertise to sustain improvement.
- Senior leaders' energy, teamwork, and enthusiasm are taking the school forward.
- Very good self-review is helping the school improve.
- Work to provide every student with a curriculum most suited to their individual needs is outstanding.
- Governors know the school very well; they provide strong drive and challenge, but have not yet made sure that the time allocated to teaching ICT in Years 10 and 11 is enough.

Commentary

90 Leadership and management are very good: the green shoots revealed by the HMI inspection in 2002, when the headteacher had only just arrived, are coming to fruition. Comparisons with provision at the time of the previous inspection are tenuous. This is a school that has undergone dramatic changes since then, when it was a much smaller 13-18 high school. After reorganisation and amalgamation it is now a much larger than average 11-18 school, recently becoming a mathematics and ICT Specialist College, it is now settling down and is improving.

91 The new headteacher's very strong leadership and excellent sense of direction underpin what are rapid improvements. She has coped decisively, yet sensitively, with the after effects of amalgamation, supporting staff well, developing and reinvigorating long-standing members of staff, as well as others who moved here because of the reorganisation. Very good teamwork is a strong feature of this effective school. There has been very good improvement since the HMI inspection.

92 Leadership's identification of the need to re-engage students with school has successfully developed alternative curricular provision such as college and work place courses, using more support staff to meet better students' pastoral needs and improving the quality of teaching and learning. As a result, the school now successfully caters for the needs of the individual and is highly inclusive in all it does. The focus on raising achievement is paying off. The school, having obtained its highest GCSE results ever in 2004, with nearly all students leaving with some kind of qualification, has its sights firmly set on continuous, sustainable improvement. The prospects for success are good.

93 The relatively new and energetic senior leadership team are very good role models, leading by example. By modelling calm, yet purposeful leadership in their high profile work, they spread a positive climate throughout the school whilst, for example, supervising behaviour in the very cramped conditions the school finds itself in. Each person is responsible for their own area of school development, under the umbrella of a very good three-pronged school improvement plan, with goals of improving teaching and learning, academic and pastoral progress and leadership and management. Each person has a personalised action plan showing clearly what is being worked upon, how it will be accomplished and by when.

94 The leadership team's rigorous work on self-evaluation means that the school is fully aware of strengths and weaker areas and to this end, the findings of the inspection did not spring any surprises. The inspection was, nonetheless, welcomed for the expertise it brought to the school and the finer points for improvement thus garnered. It is a part of the school's style that, not being content with its own self-evaluation processes, it uses a group of contacts from community and business, to provide another monitoring layer for its specialist school work. Parental consultation, currently about homework and reports, is also a growing part of the evaluation process.

95 The quality of middle management is improving; it is currently good. References to improved leadership and management throughout Part C of this report illustrate very well the school leadership's influence on the quality of provision. A clearly defined arrangement, whereby senior leaders are attached to departments and faculties, is working well. A training programme for middle managers on how to interpret data and monitor teaching and learning is reaping benefits. Managers' understanding of how to analyse students' performance data, the outcomes of which are

used to target specific groups, has improved. However, some inconsistencies in teaching remain; expectations of boys and higher attaining students are not high enough and ICT requires yet further refinement, as befits a specialist college.

96 Governors know the school well and provide very good leadership, but they do not yet provide sufficient time for ICT in Years 10 and 11. Partnerships within the governing body and with the school are working well. There is a useful two-way link between governor and senior team members. Many governors are very experienced and have a good understanding of the educational world. Monitoring visits (yet another self-evaluation strand) to find out how the school is progressing on a chosen area of the school improvement plan, leave no stone unturned! Governors' different areas of expertise are used well to help the school. Appointing sixth formers as associate governors, who attend full governing body meetings and put forward the views of the 'consumer', via the school council, is an example of good practice.

97 The quality of leadership bodes very well for the continuing success of the school. Its commitment to providing the right curriculum for each pupil is outstanding. Its main barrier to learning is the poor accommodation, which currently militates against learning rather than aiding it. Lack of physical space means students with extremes of behaviour and disaffection are being excluded rather than helped. The school misses out on some extra funding as it is situated in a relatively affluent postal code area, yet many of its students come from an area of significant deprivation. Because of this, it has to fund many posts, such as most of the learning mentor team, from its own budget. The school does, however, put the extra grants it receives to very good use.

98 Financial management is good; there are effective systems, which are well linked to those of Bradford LEA. The business manager works closely with colleagues to make sure that these are followed. This good management is similar to the picture given in the previous audit report, about three years ago. Regular reports, to an adapted LEA format, help governors monitor the financial health of the school. There are clear procedures for making purchases of goods and services to make sure that the school obtains the best value it can.

Financial information

Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	5,067,086	Balance from previous year	51,797
Total expenditure	4,985,530	Balance carried forward to the next	139,009*
Expenditure per pupil	3,607		

**Figure includes a capital carry-forward by Bradford LEA.*

99 Taking into consideration the good quality of education, rising standards and very good leadership and management and setting these against the no more than average cost of educating each student, the school provides good value for money.

Sixth form

Main strengths and weaknesses

- A strong sense of shared purpose typifies provision.
- The absence of a specific development plan is a weakness.

Commentary

100 The leadership and management of the sixth form are good. There is a sense of shared purpose and confidence by staff and students despite the lack of a formal development plan for the sixth form or co-ordinated observation of teaching and learning. This is created by the good knowledge that staff have about the needs of students and the open manner in which improvements are discussed by all. There are regular meetings for sixth form tutors and this helps to establish a clear corporate view of the key aims and objectives of everyday life and ensures that students needs are constantly under review.

101 Financial management is good and the governors have a clear view of the strengths and weaknesses of the sixth form. Arrangements for staffing and class groupings are well managed and there is good value for money.

WORK-RELATED LEARNING

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- All students have good access to careers guidance and work experience.
- Local industry and further education colleges contribute well to overall provision.
- The taught curriculum provides good support for selected students.
- In a few lessons some tasks set are too routine.

Commentary

102 The work-related learning curriculum provides good opportunities for all students in Years 10 and 11 to experience the work place and receive guidance in planning their future careers. This programme builds effectively on work carried out in Years 7-9, where students get progressively detailed careers guidance through the 'Life Tracks' programme and the 'Enterprise Pathfinder' initiative.

103 All students attend 'industry' days in Years 10 and 11. Local industry, commerce and public service effectively support these. As a result, students have good access to a wide range of external advice and support. In Year 10, all students also complete a work experience placement and all have access to further education college courses in such areas as horticulture, motor maintenance, leisure and tourism that lead to BTEC and NVQ qualifications.

104 The taught curriculum in Years 10 and 11 ensures that specific groups of students have access to an alternative work related programme of study throughout Years 10 and 11. It provides good opportunities that enable them to assess their own abilities and develop a portfolio of evidence that contributes to their overall record of achievement. Through this they gain ASDAN accreditation at different levels from bronze to gold.

105 The quality of teaching is satisfactory, with students being encouraged to reflect upon their experiences, assess their progress and develop their portfolios. However, some tasks lack the stimulation to motivate all students throughout the lesson and as a result behaviour can become inattentive.

106 The co-ordinator has developed a wide range of links with partner institutions and local employers and these enrich overall provision effectively. Leadership is good, being committed to raising achievement and identifying new opportunities for students to pursue. Management is good, with effective administrative procedures in place and good communications with all partner institutions.

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 AND 4

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

English

Provision in English is **satisfactory**

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The achievement of girls in Year 9 is very good.
- Boys in all year groups show little commitment to writing despite receiving an interesting diet of work.
- Teachers work hard and plan work very carefully to match students' needs.
- The teaching of English is well supported by the senior management team.
- Students lack confidence in reading aloud, which is not encouraged enough across the curriculum.

Commentary

107 Standards in the National Curriculum tests for Year 9 in 2004 were very close to national expectations and better than similar schools, although there was a slight downward trend from previous years. This still represents at least good achievement by the students who came to the school with a large deficit in their literacy skills. The girls make outstanding progress with a large proportion gaining the higher levels, but the achievement of boys is still not good enough despite the great efforts made to offer an interesting curriculum to them. At GCSE the performance is just below national averages in English and further below in Literature: the gap between boys and girls widens even more.

108 Though overall achievement is satisfactory in lessons and work seen, boys do not achieve well enough in the writing, mainly because of some ill-disposition towards it. Students with special educational needs achieve as well as other students. They are given good support in lessons, often with writing guidelines matched to their levels of understanding, but the lack of detail in their individual education plans leads to some inconsistency in provision from class to class. Higher attaining students do well in Year 9 with writing of high quality seen in wall displays and in books. Students with English as an additional language participate fully in class and apart from some difficulties with verb tenses, they do as well as the others.

109 Speaking and listening skills develop quite well with boys taking a full part in class discussions. Often these are well managed by the teacher to ensure that everyone has the chance to contribute. The main difference is in the quality of the answers: whereas boys are brief and seek to find humour in most things, girls are more thoughtful and build up their ideas based on what others are saying. Sometimes teachers' questions lead to a real extension of students' vocabulary as in a mixed ability Year 7 lesson taught by a teacher on supply. Linking it to their reading book he asked them to list the most forceful adjectives and was rewarded with: "adamant, aggressive and assertive" to describe one of the characters. "Argumentative, all the "A's"," he said. "Alliteration" came the reply. There is also good focus on helping students to improve their oral presentations in Year 10 and Year

11 where teachers are having good success in showing students how to interpret examination criteria.

110 Reading for meaning is better than reading aloud. Students are often hesitant; their reading aloud lacks expression at times, despite the very good models offered by teachers. Not enough teachers in subjects other than English make the effort to encourage students to read aloud and with energy. There is a very well stocked library with interesting books for all tastes and it is pleasing to see many boys from Years 7 to 9 reading at lunch times but the size, condition and location of the library are not suitable for a school with this number of students. Research skills are good but this is mainly due to the interest that most students have in computers and the Internet, and they are encouraged by teachers to use it.

111 Writing develops well in Years 7 to 9 from a very low base. When students start at the school much of their work is rushed, poorly presented and frequently unfinished. By Year 9 it is more polished with, for example, some very good poems that show originality, ingenuity and a good mastery of verse form. Higher attaining students in Years 10 and 11 also show a flair for writing in some imaginative and accurate analysis of their set books. Most students receive clear targets for improvement but the marking across the department is not always consistent. In most books marking is regular, clear and very helpful in its detail and advice on improvements. In a few cases it fails to challenge students for poor presentation, careless spelling or unfinished work. Spelling and punctuation are not as good as they should be and the school has rightly identified the need for many students to improve their proof reading.

112 The quality of teaching is good because teachers work exceptionally hard to motivate students with a lively and well-structured curriculum. Too often they are met with immaturity and, when it comes to writing, lack of commitment from a significant proportion of students often but not always boys. The department is very well supported by members of the school's senior management team who frequently teach the most challenging groups in Years 10 and 11 and teach them very well.

113 All teachers have the knowledge and strategies to manage difficult classes but students are often slow to settle even though they work quite well during the main parts of lessons. Sometimes a lack of variety in tasks and spending too long on whole class discussion leads to a lack of concentration by some students. However, there is an admirable consistency throughout the department to structure lessons carefully according to the recommendations of the National Literacy Strategy and no teaching was unsatisfactory. Many of the lessons are good, but only a small proportion is very good.

114 Leadership and management are good. The new acting head of department is making an immediate impact by setting out a very clear vision for future improvements. There have been good developments in planning work and in creating good team morale through positive support. A more rigorous monitoring programme for the marking of work is now in place. There has been satisfactory progress since the previous inspection: the best in achievement in Year 9.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

115 Standards of reading and writing across the curriculum are average except in Years 8 and 9 where they are below expectations. The recently appointed co-ordinator for literacy has made a determined start to raising awareness of the specific needs of many students in the main school. The use of writing guidelines has certainly helped many to structure their

essays more coherently but they can restrict higher attaining students who do not get enough challenge in some lessons. Modern foreign language teachers give a good lead by their very careful emphasis on the use of accurate grammar and clear speaking. Art teachers also help students to think about the way they express their ideas in writing. Despite some good practice in science to support speaking and listening, there is still too little scope given for extended writing in Years 10 and 11. A similar situation is found in geography. In reading few departments make full use of the well-stocked library to develop students' reading skills though there is plenty of opportunity provided for research using the Internet. The new drive to check marking of work, designed to improve the consistency of guidance on improving spelling across all subjects, has yet to make a full impact.

Modern foreign languages

Provision in German, French and Spanish is **very good**

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Leadership of the department is excellent.
- In 2004, GCSE results in modern languages were above average.
- In Years 7-9, able students do not make sufficient progress in French and Spanish.
- Boys' achievement in German is excellent.
- Students have excellent attitudes to the German language and culture.
- The department supports students' literacy development very well.

Commentary

116 GCSE results in modern languages in 2004 were above average. In German they were well above average, in French above average and in Spanish they were below average. In German, boys' achievement was excellent compared with the national results for boys; moreover, they achieved better results in German than in all their other subjects. In recent years, results have been generally above average. Staffing difficulties in Spanish, which are now resolved, contributed to disappointing results in 2004.

117 Standards at the end of Year 9 are average overall, and students' achievement is good; their achievement in German is very good, because of consistently very good quality teaching. Students can write and speak confidently, using the past and present tenses, for example about holidays, and able students can also use the future tenses. In the beginners' courses, achievement is very good; in a short time, students can write and speak about family and the local area and can understand native speakers using familiar language. In Spanish, students develop extended writing very well. All students understand how language works; they develop literacy very well due to the teachers' clear explanations of grammar and emphasis on accuracy. In French and Spanish, achievement is good overall, but able students make only satisfactory progress; they cannot speak personally and creatively in French and Spanish because of insufficient opportunities to develop personal speaking. Against national trends, in French and Spanish, boys achieve as well as girls, and in German they achieve better than girls.

118 By the end of Year 11 standards are above average overall and students' achievement is very good. In German all students, including lower attaining students, make excellent progress due to consistently very good or excellent teaching. In French, standards are above average and in Spanish standards have improved to average. In both these languages students achieve well. Students have very good attitudes to language learning and excellent attitudes to the German language and culture as a result of informative displays, foreign visits and working with the foreign language assistants. All students can express themselves well in speaking and writing in German and in French and Spanish when supported, for example, when describing work experience. They

can understand and respond to recordings of native speakers according to their ability; however, home study opportunities are sometimes limited, especially in Spanish, by the lack of textbooks.

119 In all years, students with special educational needs receive good extra help and achieve well. Students' use of ICT is satisfactory.

120 Teaching and learning are very good overall. In two excellently taught lessons - Year 11 German and Year 8 Spanish - the teachers' effective planning and highly skilled use of the interactive whiteboard motivated all students, especially boys. In satisfactorily taught lessons the teachers' lack of clear explanation and slow pace prevented students from making fast enough progress, especially in Year 8. Assessment is very good overall; students are fully aware of their national levels, record their own progress, and contribute to target setting; however, marking in Years 7-9 is occasionally inconsistent.

121 Leadership is excellent, providing strong vision and direction, and management is very good. Thorough use of assessment data and meticulous organisation of the large department are contributing to rising standards. Areas for development are: in French and Spanish, ensuring able students achieve better, and that the progress of all Year 8 students is accelerated.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **very good**

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students' achievement is very good.
- Very strong leadership and management have resulted in consistent improvement in standards and in raising the profile of mathematics.
- The national strategy for improving teaching and learning is working well.
- The use of ICT has a positive effect on achievement.
- Sometimes, higher attainers are not challenged enough.
- Improvement since the previous inspection is very good.
- The department's action plan identifies correctly where further improvements can be made.

Commentary

122 The standards reached in the 2004 National Curriculum tests in Year 9 were in line with national averages and towards the higher end of that group. These results were well above those of similar schools, as they also were in 2003. As standards on entry are below average this represents very good achievement.

123 The standards reached in the 2004 GCSE examinations were above average and above similar schools. This also shows very good achievement. Both boys and girls do much better in mathematics than in many other subjects, and there is an upward trend in results.

124 There is little difference by gender or ethnicity in these test and examination results, except that girls gain a higher proportion of A* to C grades than boys do. This largely reflects the differing standards when they started as 11 year-olds.

125 The work seen in Years 7-9 and Years 10 and 11 also shows very good achievement. Students with special educational needs achieve as well as their peers, because of good teaching and effective extra hands to help their learning.

126 The standards of work seen in Year 9 are average overall, with higher attainers reaching well above average standards. The standards of work seen in Year 11 are above average overall, with many higher attainers reaching high standards and many average attainers improving to reach beyond what would normally be expected of them. There are very good relationships between students and teachers; there is a positive atmosphere for learning. The cumulative effect of all these factors is shown in students' very good achievement.

127 As they progress from Years 7 to 11, students reach similar standards across all aspects of mathematics. Higher attainers develop strong conceptual skills, moving quickly from concrete examples to algebraic expressions; their algebraic skills are very good. Lower attainers find this much more difficult: they are more confident dealing with practical, real life examples. However, they are able to solve simple linear equations and substitute into expressions. Lower attainers also find it difficult to cope with multi-step problems; higher and average attainers are more skilled at this.

128 Teaching and learning are good. A significant proportion is very good. All teachers match their methods and tasks closely to students' needs. In a Year 11 lower attainers' class, different cardboard shapes enabled students to understand, and then draw, nets of different solids. The impact of skilled use of ICT is also a positive factor in students' learning. For example, in a Year 8 lower attainers' class, an interactive programme was used effectively to develop understanding of place value and multiplication by powers of ten.

129 In a Year 11 higher attainers' lesson, clear explanations and good questioning quickly pinpointed what students understood and what needed further development. Challenging questions were used to test their ability to develop strategies for the solution of unusual problems. In lower quality teaching, the higher attainers within the group were not always given enough challenging work, or a few students were unco-operative and slowed the learning of others. However, class management is usually very good: there is a strong working atmosphere with clearly established routines helping students to learn effectively.

130 The national strategy to improve teaching and learning has had a strong impact on widening teaching and learning methods through very good implementation by school and area co-ordinators.

131 The leadership and management of a strong specialist team of teachers are very good. This is shown in the high profile of mathematics in the school as an enjoyable and lively subject. There is a wide range of activities outside timetabled lessons, for example Mathematics Activities Days (MAD Friday) when all lessons have a mathematical focus to the particular subject. The positive impact of specialist college status is shown in this and in the effective use of ICT.

132 Provision justifies fully the school's specialist college status. Improvement since the previous inspection is very good; standards and achievement have improved considerably, as has extra help for students with special educational needs.

Mathematics across the curriculum

133 Students' skills in mathematics are good, helping them to make progress in other subjects. In science these skills are used in the interpretation and drawing of graphs and in calculations. Students in history have a good understanding of chronology and in ICT they can confidently use formulae in spreadsheets. In geography students can use their drawing skills to find out the impact of earthquakes, for example the time for shock waves to occur. Students can make employment-related calculations, such as pay slips, and taxes, in business education.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **good**

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Leadership and management are good.
- Curricular provision is particularly good in Years 10 and 11.
- Teaching and learning are good.
- The demands made on students' literacy, particularly oracy and extended writing skills are not high enough.

- Marking does not show students clearly enough how they could improve their work.
- Poor accommodation limits opportunities.

Commentary

134 Results in the 2004 national tests for 14 year-olds were significantly below those in English and mathematics, as they had been in 2003; they were also below national averages. Results were in line with those of similar schools. Girls did much better than boys who let the side down. Having analysed the results very carefully, the school is concentrating hard on eradicating boys' revealed weaknesses in writing about science. In 2004, GCSE results were in line with national average when double award science, biology, chemistry and physics are considered together. Girls again did much better than boys. However, overall achievement is good with students from ethnic minorities and those with special educational needs also achieving well.

135 Work seen in Years 7 to 9 is better than that suggested by national test results. Achievement is now good in these years. This is because of good teaching. Teachers have a good knowledge of their students' strengths and needs; they tailor their lessons accordingly. Effective arrangements for making up classes according to the students' ability help to raise standards. Teaching focuses on improving students' thinking and literacy skills to help them do better in writing about science. Students have a good understanding of scientific method. They can handle data, plan and carry out investigations and approach problem solving effectively but they still lack some confidence in expressing their ideas both when speaking and writing.

136 Standards seen in Years 10 and 11 are in line with Year 9 test results. Students' written work is satisfactory, as is their work in lessons. As a result of good teaching and learning activities students can understand and apply scientific knowledge and ideas to new situations, produce and use graphs, manipulate formulae and equations and plan and carry out investigative work in line with national expectations. Pupils are more confident in explaining their ideas both orally and in writing but opportunities to develop their oracy and extended writing skills are too few at this stage.

137 Students' good attitudes, behaviour and relations with staff help to produce the good learning that occurs in Years 7 to 11. Teaching is good. In the best lessons, students were able to share and develop their ideas through skilful questioning by and of the teacher or through working in small groups. Such lessons began with an engaging activity and continued at a good pace, with a variety of time-limited activities; the classroom and resources used were well managed. During the lesson, the teacher assessed progress and adjusted the work accordingly. Most lessons showed some of these features but, in too many, there were not enough chances for students to work on speaking, listening or extended writing skills. Similarly, marking too often omits to inform students how to improve the quality of their work, so assessment has scope for improvement. ICT is used well to help students to learn through, for example, spreadsheets and animations using a data projector. The poor layout and services in most of the inconveniently located laboratories hamper what are good resources and very good technical support.

138 Leadership and management are both good. The head of department has very clear strategies for continual improvement. Good systems for assessment and monitoring are in place, but some teachers fail to apply the principles of assessment for learning when assessing students' work.

139 Students enjoy a wide range of curricular and extra-curricular opportunities, especially in Years 10 and 11, with the addition of further vocational courses in prospect.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Provision in ICT is **satisfactory**

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The curriculum for students in Years 10 and 11 lacks clarity.
- Teaching and learning are good, leading to good achievement by students.
- Students have good attitudes and are interested in the subject.
- There is good leadership and management of the subject.
- Not enough use is made of National Curriculum levels to show students how they are doing.

Commentary

140 In the 2004 examinations all students obtained passes in GNVQ ICT. Standards of work seen during the inspection are at the level expected in all years, and similar to those seen nationally.

141 In Years 7 and 8 students learn how to use different software programmes, such as word processing, presenting slide shows, creating websites, publishing brochures, using spreadsheets and searching the Internet. In Year 9 students use word-processing skills well to produce formal letters, and in desktop publishing to create newsletters. They make good use of skills in creating slide shows about the planets.

142 Standards in Year 11 applied GCSE and in GNVQ ICT are at expected levels. Students taking the applied course understand how ICT is used in the community and how it can be used to help people with disabilities. Those taking the GNVQ course understand how to use more complex options in spreadsheets, for example with formulae and graphs for the sale of goods.

143 Students arrive in the school with below expected levels of competence in using ICT. Achievement is good. Students with special educational needs achieve equally as well as other students, as they are fully included in lessons and well supported by teachers. By Year 9 they reach the levels expected for students of this age. There is good achievement by students in Year 11 taking the GNVQ intermediate course. Achievement by students in Year 11 taking key skills is limited, as they only have one lesson every two weeks.

144 Teaching and learning are good. Teachers have a good understanding of their subject, and are able to give students good explanations about the use of software: this leads to good progress. Lessons are well planned around the national strategy to improve literacy and work is set to match students' capabilities. Students have good attitudes in lessons, and their work rates contribute to the good progress they make. The National Key Stage 3 ICT strategy is well adapted to ensure it meets students' capabilities. The assessment of students' work is good, but students have little opportunity to see how their work rates against National Curriculum levels.

145 The subject is well led and managed. There is a good development plan with vision to improve the department. The present curriculum in Years 10 and 11 is imbalanced, as the key skills course in Year 11 is short on time. There is very good technical support for the subject.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

146 Students have satisfactory levels of knowledge and understanding that allow them to reinforce their ICT skills in other subjects. There are very good applications in mathematics, where the skilled use of interactive whiteboards contributes to the good progress students make. In science and geography, art and design, music and modern foreign languages there is good use of the technology. Good on the job training helps teachers develop their skills in specialist hard and software. The school is well supplied with computers; to compensate the high demands on computer rooms, departments are increasingly equipped with their own machines. Sets of mobile laptops prove particularly useful where departments, such as history, do not have the space for permanent computers. The impact of the specialist status is starting to have a marked effect on provision and students' appreciation of how ICT helps their learning. All departments plan ICT into their schemes of work, but there is scope for improvement in the identification of opportunities through which students improve their ICT skills in other subjects and the time available for specific study in Year 10.

HUMANITIES

Geography

Provision in geography is **good**

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Most students achieve well because good teaching motivates them: results are above average.
- Girls do better than boys.
- The subject promotes students' personal development effectively.

- In some lessons students are not challenged sufficiently.
- Good leadership ensures new staff are well supported.
- Educational visits enrich the curriculum significantly.

Commentary

147 In the 2004 GCSE examinations students achieved standards that were above the national average. Significantly more girls than boys achieved the highest grades. Standards in Year 9, based upon teacher assessments, were broadly average.

148 Standards seen during the inspection are broadly average for students in Year 9 and Year 11. In both year groups higher attaining students achieve standards that are above average. These standards are in line with departmental targets based upon prior attainment and reflect the overall balance of ability within these two cohorts of students.

149 By Year 9 achievement is good. Most students work hard to build effectively upon prior learning and acquire a good range of skills. In a lesson on Eco-systems, they showed how different species are adapted to their environment. They linked this effectively to climatic variations in different regions, which they found in an atlas. Students use graphs accurately to compare temperature and rainfall in different locations. They do not always have the confidence to develop their subject vocabulary in oral work and this has an adverse effect upon the quality of written work.

150 By Year 11 achievement is good because most students have positive attitudes towards learning. Many write in considerable detail and the more able produce carefully argued case studies, supported with relevant data. Students demonstrate a good overview of differing issues, such as urbanisation and fair trade. Many can use evidence to support a particular viewpoint. They improve their social skills through collaborative tasks. However, students do not always interrogate data with sufficient rigour and so cannot explain the key points revealed. On occasion, they lack confidence in using subject vocabulary and do not express their thinking clearly in conversation. As a result their argument lacks conviction and weakens the quality of written work.

151 Teaching and learning are good. Strengths include a secure command of subject, effective encouragement and engagement with students and good pupil management. Sometimes, there is insufficient challenge and students are not sufficiently stretched in oral work. Assessment procedures are good, with evidence of diagnostic marking helping students identify how to improve their work.

152 The department has recently undergone staff changes. The newly appointed acting head of department provides good leadership and is a good role model for colleagues. Newly qualified and temporary staff get good quality help. Management is satisfactory; there is efficient day-to-day administration and a developing use of data. The department receives strong support from a newly appointed deputy headteacher. The good quality curriculum ensures all students benefit from considerable enrichment beyond statutory requirements. This is provided by carefully planned educational visits that help personal development. Overall provision is good, as is improvement since the previous inspection.

History

Provision in history is **satisfactory**

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards in GCSE are rising because of good examination preparation, coursework and revision support.

- Insufficient monitoring permits inconsistencies in teaching and assessment that affect achievement.
- Students are active participants in learning because of good teaching.
- ICT enriches and accelerates learning.

Commentary

153 Standards of work seen in Year 9 are below average. Writing lacks some depth, as there is not a wide enough range of illustrative evidence and interpretation beyond simple moral judgements and single cause/consequence links; this is especially so among higher attaining students. This was an issue at the previous inspection. However, achievement is satisfactory, as students have well-developed techniques for interpreting different types of sources, detecting and explaining bias. Their history study skills develop literacy through reading, scanning, extracting information, categorising, making lists, highlighting and using spider grams. As a result, they apply knowledge and understanding accurately and effectively. Writing is well structured and many are efficient note-makers. Some higher attaining boys write very succinctly. Students experience alternative viewpoints through writing creatively, questioning visitors and studying historical sites. Teachers' assessments are inconsistent because test assignments are not common to all classes and while most students know their National Curriculum levels, most marking does not identify the history skills achieved and how to improve.

154 In 2004 GCSE results were above average, on an upward trend, both boys and girls doing well at the highest levels, although a significant number of very low boys' grades meant they did not do as well as girls in comparison with other subjects. History is a popular subject and although standards of work seen are average, students' active commitment in learning means they achieve well, in line with predictions. History skills are consolidated through the use of GCSE examination criteria in preparation for and after writing, so students know what skills are required to gain most marks. Coursework pulls skills together. Students are inspired by local philanthropists Titus Salt and Jonathan Silver "(an entrepreneur of many visions)" after analysing almost twenty different sources to evaluate dramatic change. Higher attainers are thorough in judging reliability of sources and find alternative phrases to avoid repetition and to introduce new ideas.

155 Teaching and learning are good. In the best cases, there is exciting collaborative learning where students discuss in pairs and with the whole class, exploring and applying new knowledge in a variety of ways. Some teachers share objectives with students and assess learning intermittently so students know how they are progressing. Some teachers enrich learning using interactive whiteboards, to move back and forth among images, instructions, guides for writing, summaries of pair work, lesson objectives. However, some teaching lacks detail in preparation.

156 Improvement since the previous inspection is satisfactory because standards have risen, resource provision is responsive to change and teaching is better.

157 Leadership and management are satisfactory. The full impact of imaginative teaching is not realised because monitoring is weak. Discussions about best practice in marking, in devising and moderating assessments, in using skills objectives and in developing active learning with all students do not occur.

Religious education

Provision in religious education is **satisfactory**

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching in Years 10 and 11 enables the whole year group to progress.
- Good leadership and management set high standards.
- Teaching is inconsistent in Years 7 to 9.
- The behaviour of a few students disturbs work in some lessons, particularly in Years 8 and 9.
- There is insufficient use of ICT to make lessons challenging and interesting, especially to boys.

Commentary

158 Achievement is satisfactory in Years 7-9 and good in Years 10 and 11. Students' generally well presented books and assignments show steady progress through the work. By the end of Year 9 many students are aware that human beings have a variety of beliefs and that symbols play an important part in their religion. Most students are able to talk about a major world disaster and make some comment about its effects and the way that people come to terms with natural threats and the awe inspiring power of the planet. Many students can devise questions about the moral and spiritual issues they study, though only a few can distinguish between simple factual questions and those requiring deeper thought and analysis. Pupils with special educational needs attain in line with expectations, although they do not have extra in-class help; in a few cases this leads to isolation and underachievement.

159 The arrangements for teaching religious education in Years 10 and 11 have recently been modified. Year 11 students do not have sufficient time to cover the requirements of the Bradford agreed syllabus. This has a detrimental effect on their achievement and the GCSE results in 2004, especially for boys, were well below the national average. Nevertheless, many students achieved their predicted grade. In the current Year 10 slightly more time is available and the standards of work seen in class are average. That the school ensures that all students follow the short course GCSE is commendable; all can consider how religions can help in a wider understanding of contemporary issues. A Year 11 lesson on crime enabled students to work in small, supportive groups to develop their views and opinions on punishments.

160 Teaching and learning are satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 and good in Years 10 and 11. In the early years a few students find it difficult to concentrate and are poorly motivated: this disturbs lessons and results in slower progress and the teaching methods used do not solve the problem: standards of teaching are not consistent across the department. All teachers have good knowledge of their subject and there are generally good relationships between students and staff. The department has introduced assessment units, which work well. Many comments on class work are not as helpful as they could be, as they concentrate too much on presentation and not enough on standards and how to improve. Work has started on developing students' literacy skills but there are too few opportunities for writing at length or for producing writing that requires reasoned responses. The best lessons observed were where students worked in small groups and pairs that enabled them to develop their oral skills and take part in debate, thus extending their ideas. Although the department has begun to work with colleagues in ICT this has had only a small impact on learning. The lack of ICT equipment in all classrooms limits opportunities for more exciting learning to stimulate boys' learning in particular.

161 Leadership and management are good. The head of department has only been in post a short time but has a clear vision, sets high standards and provides a good role model for staff and students. Monitoring of lessons is followed up by good support, but at this stage the analysis and use of attainment data is not well established. The improvement since the previous inspection has been satisfactory.

TECHNOLOGY

Design and technology

Provision in design and technology is **good**

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve well, but the writing of some lacks depth.
- The quality of teaching and learning is good.
- Students are well behaved and have good attitudes to learning.
- There are good systems to assess students' work and for tracking their progress.
- The department is well led and managed.
- There is not enough precisely planned provision for the most able.
- GCSE results in resistant materials and graphics have not been good enough.

Commentary

162 Standards are average by Year 9. This represents good achievement. Students arrive with varied experience of design and technology but are below average overall. During their first term in Year 7, students make good progress with practical skills and learning about the materials they use. By Year 9, they develop and evaluate products showing good understanding of consumer needs and wants, for example when they design clocks. They have sound drawing skills and communicate their ideas effectively using annotated sketching and formal drawings, although some students' written work lacks depth: ideas are not always evaluated thoroughly. A few lower attainers have poor pencil control and have not grasped the principles of using rendering techniques to illustrate materials realistically. Students have a sound understanding of the materials and tools they use because teachers combine theory and practical work very effectively. In food studies students have a good understanding of the function of ingredients. There is little difference between boys' and girls' work at this stage.

163 GCSE results were well below average in 2004 for students obtaining higher grades, A*-C. They were particularly poor in resistant materials and graphics because of staffing difficulties. Although results in food studies were below average, students obtained grades that were higher than expectations. The proportion of students obtaining grades A*-G was similar to the national average. Girls did better than boys by about the same margin as they do nationally.

164 Standards in work seen are still below average in the current Year 11 but are improving because of greater staffing stability and because of good quality teaching. Students have well organised folders of work in food studies and they understand the scientific principles of food preparation and so are able to plan and modify their products to meet particular purposes. The standard of practical work is average in textiles and higher attaining students produce imaginative designs for clothing showing good understanding of

the market. Students begin coursework with a clear idea of what is required and have overall plans of the work to be completed. However, many have insufficient personal organisation to maintain up to date records of work as it progresses and rely too much on teachers to remind them of deadlines. Also, numerous students in resistant materials have insufficient knowledge of materials and processes, because they have not yet had time to catch up. Although they are working hard, they are currently behind with coursework.

165 The quality of teaching is good overall: it is often very good but occasionally is unsatisfactory, mainly because of weak time management. Teachers have very good command of their subject and very good understanding of examination syllabus requirements. These are used to good effect for planning lessons and making the best use of resources. There are generally very good relationships between teachers and students, which result in very good co-operation. Although work planned is suitably challenging and open-ended for all students, it is not always clear what the most able are expected to do in addition. Teachers assess work thoroughly and explain to students what they need to do to improve. In the best lessons, efficient use of time maintains a very good pace to meet targets; there is very clear explanation of work so students can work with a good degree of independence. Occasionally, lessons are conducted at too slow a pace and, although the work is interesting, students are easily distracted, so they learn too little. There are good departmental support systems to help students with special educational needs.

166 Leadership and management are good. The new appointment to take responsibility for resistant materials has strengthened the team and there are already improvements to provision and standards. The management structure works well because teachers are united in their aim to share good practice to raise overall attainment. The dusty state of the floors in some workshops and food rooms is at variance with teaching students about hygienic working conditions.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

167 Art and design was the main focus of the inspection and is reported fully below. Performing arts was also sampled.

168 In the five sampled **performing arts** lessons, some students did not concentrate well enough. Some lower attaining students did not engage with the tasks and therefore failed to achieve well enough. The quality of teaching and learning was satisfactory. Lessons started with good, short opening activities. However, there were low-level behavioural issues, some of which arose from some of the following work that failed to engage and challenge students appropriately: a lack of visual resources compounded the situation.

Art and design

Provision in art and design is **good**

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Leadership and management are good: there is a very clear focus on teaching and learning.
- Rising standards are being achieved through effective programmes of study, though higher attainers are not challenged consistently enough.
- Teaching and learning are good.
- Teachers do not take enough opportunities to help learning through demonstration.
- Inadequate accommodation limits the range of work that can be undertaken.

Commentary

169 Attainment on entry is below average. The early work of Year 7 students confirms this although there are positive indicators of progress as they move through to Year 9. By the end of Year 9 the standards of work seen are above expectations. Students research different cultures, use a range of two and three dimensional materials as well as simple stencilling processes. Boys achieve as well as girls. Students with special educational needs get good extra help. The work of more able students is detailed but lacks pace.

170 As a result of focused teaching, achievement in Years 7-9 is good. Planning in sketchbooks is thorough. There is a logical build up of experiences that lead to successful outcomes. Consistent marking shows students clearly how to improve.

171 By the end of Year 11, standards of work seen are in line with expectations. In recent years, GCSE higher grades, A*-C, have been significantly below national averages. Boys' results have also been significantly lower than those of girls. In lessons, standards now show a more encouraging picture. The work of students with special educational needs is satisfactory, while more able students, though sometimes not challenged sufficiently, work to an acceptable standard.

172 Achievement in Years 10 and 11 is good overall. Students work systematically through a number of stages to successful outcomes. They understand portfolio requirements and decide on extension materials that will help them to improve their grades. Higher ability students use colour extensively with increasing levels of control. Work shows signs of individuality, although inadequate facilities limit the size of work and inhibit higher grades.

173 The quality of teaching and learning is good in Years 7-9. Teachers give very clear explanations of what is to be done; adequate consumable resources are available, but visual resources are not always adequate. Also, opportunities to enhance learning through demonstrations and the sharing of good practice are not always taken. Time is used effectively, with timed exercises in-built. The work is clearly designed to reinforce literacy.

174 The quality of teaching and learning in Years 10 and 11 is good. Very well focused teaching successfully engages students who work consistently hard; there is a sense of urgency and a drive to achieve. Planning is clear, so students know what they have to do. Good class discussion adds to achievement, as it gives students a good idea of how they are doing. Students are quite independent in their learning, the first signs of individualised work starting to emerge. Students assess their own work and justify this to others.

175 There is a very good range of enrichment activities. There is provision specifically for gifted and talented students as well as other ability groups.

176 Leadership is good. In recent years, staffing problems affected learning adversely. As a result, standards fell, but projected GCSE grades show things are changing. Improved planning, better schemes of work and data analysis form a good foundation for improvements. A weakness

lies in the absence of work tailored for all ability groups, in particular gifted and talented students. Management is good. Monitoring of teaching and learning takes place, with the intention of making this more systematic.

177 There has been very good progress since the previous inspection; achievement in lessons is now consistently good and teaching, learning and assessment have improved.

Media studies

Provision in media studies is **good**

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Higher attaining students achieved excellent GCSE results in 2004.
- Teachers make good use of a range of resources to generate lively classroom debate.
- Students struggle at first to understand technical terminology.
- Most students achieve well by the end of the course.
- The subject makes a very good contribution to students' understanding of moral and cultural issues.

Commentary

178 Standards in GCSE have been steadily rising and they are now in line with the national average. The performance of higher attaining students is excellent, with over a quarter of a reasonably large entry having gained grade A* or A in 2004. The current Year 11, smaller in number, are not performing to such high standards but the vast majority are within the grade A* to C boundaries. This represents good achievement from most students.

179 Students make very good progress from Year 10 to Year 11 because the teaching is good and there is a fair degree of challenge provided for them. In Year 10 they are forced to think for themselves and use technical language in the proper context. They are also given the chance to research using ICT, after which they must contribute to whole class debate. They have a growing understanding of the constraints of law and the importance of audience to media producers. As they get older they apply these skills and knowledge to help them research, design and construct advertising material and other products such as newspaper pages and CD covers. Their evaluations are satisfactory though the language used by many is stilted and they need the support of the teacher to help them clarify their understanding. By Year 11 most have made visible progress in a highly structured course.

180 Teaching is good with high expectations shown of the students. In Year 10 the teaching mainly tells students what to do, but by Year 11 more is expected of them and they, nearly all girls, show good independence of thought and strength of conviction. They struggle to express their ideas in a formal way but, helped by the teacher's subtle interjections, they are able to point out the key features and to see the moral and cultural implications of various types of media output. Students enjoy the subject, trust their teachers and learn by lively debate.

181 The leadership and management of the subject are good. Teachers work well as a team and moderate standards jointly. They stimulate their classes with a varied and challenging range of material. Accommodation is adequate, but some of the resource materials are outdated and showing signs of wear.

Music

Provision in music is **very good**

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning are very good.
- There is very good leadership and management.
- ICT is used very well in Years 10 and 11.
- The students receive a high level of individual attention in lessons.
- Lessons are well planned and there is very good use of resources.
- Not all work is tailored to match the differing needs of students, which sometimes inhibits learning.

Commentary

182 Overall, standards of attainment are well above average. GCSE results in 2004 were in line with the national average; this is a dip from previous well above average results. Incomplete course work and lack of instrumental experience in the group were factors contributing to the results.

183 In work seen, standards of attainment in Years 10 and 11 are well above average. Students perform fluently and confidently in solos and ensembles. Their compositions show enterprise and variety and indicate very good ICT standards. Standards in Years 7-9 are above average. Students play keyboards well using effective fingering systems and showing good familiarity with musical notations. Their compositions are varied in style with good progression from year to year. There is imaginative exploitation of timbre and texture. Performances are cohesive and they co-operate well when playing together. Overall, the students are achieving very well. In relation to their standards on entry they achieve well in attaining above average standards by Year 9. They then do very well in attaining well above average standards by Year 11. There is very good use of ICT to help the students in their composition work; as a result, productivity is high with students producing interesting compositions of substantial length. This is a result of very good teaching and a high level of individual attention which also ensures that gifted and talented students and those with special educational needs achieve equally well. There are no significant differences in the achievement of boys and girls or of students of differing ethnicity.

184 The quality of teaching and learning is very good overall. In Years 7-9 it is good with many strong features. The teachers have very good subject knowledge and use it well when planning lessons. There is very good use of a variety of resources including electronic and acoustic instruments. Explanations are very clear, but sometimes over long; these reduce time available for practical work. Management and control are very good and this results in generally good behaviour. A good level of individual attention during practical work ensures productive working; this also helps students with special educational needs to make equal progress. The work set allows all students to be fully integrated into all the activities and work at differing levels but insufficient use is made of tasks matched to the needs of differing groups of students. Teaching and learning are very good in Years 10 and 11. All the above strengths apply but with even higher levels of individual attention. The students work very well independently, responding to the teachers' high expectations. The assessment of students' work is thorough and students are well informed as to how well they are doing. The standard of instrumental teaching provided by the visiting specialist teachers is very good.

185 Leadership and management are very good. The leadership provides a very good role model, has established a very effective team and created a very good ethos in the department. The department is very well managed. The instrumental teaching is very well co-ordinated, as is the extra-curricular work. The leadership sets high standards with a

good focus on musicianship. The department makes a very good contribution to the students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. This is achieved through a good focus on the music of other cultures, well chosen musical repertoires for performance and listening, and very good opportunities for extra-curricular activities. There has been very good improvement since the previous inspection. Attainment has risen, the quality of teaching has improved; the coverage of world music has been increased.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Provision in physical education is **good**

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are well below average when students start in Year 7, but they then achieve well.
- Standards improve because of good teaching and learning.
- Results at GCSE are above average.
- Indoor accommodation is poor.

Commentary

186 GCSE results were well above average in 2004. Overall, students did better in the subject than in others in which they were examined. In this subject alone, the results of boys were better than those of girls. Some students, mostly girls, chose to specialise in dance rather than physical education.

187 In work seen, standards of performance by Year 9 are below average. Achievement is, however, good because students arrive at the school with well below average skills, especially those of ball handling. Skills of catching, accurate passing, basic techniques of attack and defence are weak. Understanding of which muscles are being stretched in warm up sessions is often good and in the case of Year 7 relates to learning since arrival at the school. Evidence of improving standards in Year 9 was seen in a hockey lesson for boys and a dance lesson for girls.

188 In Years 10 and 11, students taking GCSE courses reach good standards. They have good understanding of basic anatomy and physiology. They can write sensibly about topics such as the importance to athletes of a healthy diet. Writing is sufficiently clear and accurate to show what students know and understand. Weaker work often lacks necessary detail and reveals incomplete understanding of what questions require. Good performance skills were seen in a mixed hockey group where students showed good grasp of techniques. Standards of other students are lower but some make very good progress within lessons. A Year 11 group with almost no earlier experience of basketball performed well above reasonable expectation because they learned quickly from very good teaching.

189 The quality of teaching is good. Teachers are versatile. They understand the difficulties experienced by some students and provide extra help and encouragement. They plan lessons well. In lessons, tasks are clearly explained and demonstrations are good. Wandering attention is checked, so students are attentive and want to make progress. The warm up at the start of practical lessons is effectively used to develop understanding of anatomy and physiology. The practice of students leading warm-ups is effective and could be widely used. Students are proud of their successes; they learn well in difficult conditions. Sometimes, the reinforcement of learning at the end of lessons is given too little time.

190 The work of the department is well managed. Teachers are highly supportive of each other and all seek to improve the standards of all students. The accommodation is inadequate for a school of this size. The very poor acoustics of the gymnasium with its inadequately cleaned floor and having to use the hall and other unsuitable places represent obstacles to learning. These faults were noted in the previous report. Since that time

tennis and netball courts have been patched and the drainage of part of the grassed areas improved. The GCSE course has been introduced successfully.

BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES

191 Two GCSE **business studies** lessons were sampled. GCSE results are average overall. In 2004 girls achieved above average results that were higher than boys whose results were well below average. Teaching and learning were satisfactory in the sampled lessons. Year 10 students were supported well by their teacher and most students made good progress, for example using their textbooks for research towards a group presentation on business ownership. Extension activities encouraged the more able students to compare forms of ownership who showed a good understanding of the differences.

192 There was a slow start to a Year 11 lesson because of late arrivals. Students sustained attention, gathered information from a video but had no opportunities to reinforce learning during the long viewing session. Objectives were not always sufficiently focussed on what was to be learned, and the final part of the lesson was not used effectively enough to review learning. Students do not have regular access to computers in lessons in order to enhance presentation or carry out wider research on the Internet.

193 A Year 11 **health and social care** lesson was sampled. The course makes a valuable contribution to vocational provision and work-related learning in Year 11. Students reach above average standards and achieve well. This is because they benefit from good teaching and have very positive attitudes to learning. Teachers are particularly successful in devising means to stimulate meaningful discussion in small groups and with the whole class. Students show understanding of the care needs of vulnerable people such as the elderly and young children and have gained in personal development from work placements linked to their examination course.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

194 **The personal, social and health education programme** is taught within guidance time, through the contributions found within other subjects' schemes of work and as part of the wider curricular provision that includes the student council, community links and charitable fundraising. A very strong contribution is made to the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development through the studying topics such as, the family, racism and drugs abuse. The programme covers sex and other aspects of health education thoroughly, with due emphasis on family life.

Citizenship

Provision in citizenship is **satisfactory**

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good leadership is supporting staff and students effectively.
- In Years 10 and 11, achievement is variable, because of option choice.
- Good use is made of external support to enhance the curriculum.
- Current planning reduces opportunities for curriculum and staff development.

Commentary

195 In Year 9 and Year 11, standards of work seen are as expected, with students gaining satisfactory levels of knowledge and understanding and developing a range of skills. In Year 9, students know how young people are dealt with by the courts and can distinguish between the differing roles of parliament and government. In Year 11, students

identify links between political, economic and social issues when considering the issue of 'Third World' debt.

196 Achievement is satisfactory. Students steadily improve their knowledge and understanding. They improve their skills in oral and written communication and recognise the validity of differing viewpoints. As they mature, students increasingly take responsibility in school, for example as members of the school council and in fundraising for emergency relief. Whilst some students achieve well, overall achievement, especially in Years 10 and 11 is variable. It is partly dependent upon option choice, where specific citizenship objectives are more readily identified in some subjects than in others.

197 The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory in the 'guidance period,' where all students follow the personal, social, health and citizenship curriculum. Strengths in teaching include good relationships and encouragement for students. Teaching is well supported by the use of a commercial scheme, which provides the key resource. Individual members of staff bring differing degrees of expertise and personal interest to this subject. The school makes good use of external expertise to broaden the dimension of students' experiences.

198 A number of departments contribute well by identifying and including citizenship objectives into their subject lesson plans. However, the current timetabling and staffing arrangements reduce opportunities to plan major citizenship events for specific year groups. These factors also constrain attempts to improve expertise amongst key groups of staff.

199 Leadership is good; the committed team of staff have clear determination to move the subject forward and to raise achievement. They work hard to motivate and support all staff who teach the subject. Management is satisfactory; it ensures all teaching staff has access to the resources to teach the curriculum. At present there is insufficient monitoring of standards and teaching to help improve the overall quality of learning. The citizenship curriculum adds a public dimension to students' personal development. The school is successful in providing the 'active' citizenship programme available beyond the classroom and some students are fully involved in this. The school is aware of the need to move forward, by improving access to the wider curriculum for all and gaining a clearer view of standards achieved. At present, overall provision is satisfactory.

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM

200 In the inspection, 9 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.

201 The table below shows entry and performance information, where available, for courses completed in 2004.

Attainment at the end of the sixth form (Year 13)

		For candidates entered for GCE A / AS / Advanced GNVQ / VCE examinations		
		Boys	Girls	All
School	Number of candidates	27	32	59
	Average point score per candidate	225.7 (n/a)	287.8 (n/a)	258.8 (266.0)
National	Average point score per candidate	245.2 (n/a)	260.8 (n/a)	265.2 (258.2)

		For candidates entered for GCE A / AS examinations			For candidates entered for Advanced GNVQ / VCE examinations		
		Boys	Girls	All	Boys	Girls	All
School	Number of candidates	27	32	59	9	2	11
	Average point score per candidate	189.6	268.1	232.2	80	86	82
National	Average point score per candidate	N/a	N/a	N/a	64.6	72.6	68.8

Figures in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

202 The focus of the inspection was on English language and literature, reported on in full below English literature was sampled.

203 In an observed **English literature** lesson, students took on roles from "Othello" in a lively manner and, encouraged by good teaching, showed that they were achieving well and had established good background knowledge of the themes and characters.

English

Provision in English language is **good**

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are above average.
- Students' positive attitudes contribute to good achievement.
- The quality of teaching and learning is good.
- Leadership of the course is very good.

Commentary

204 In 2004, results matched the national average at both A/S and A-levels for the proportions gaining passes and those gaining the highest grades, A/B. Results at A-level

were above average in 2003. Students' attainment matches expectation based upon earlier results and sometimes exceeds it. Very few students drop out of courses.

205 Standards of work seen in Year 12 are above average. Students have adapted quickly to the demands of the course. Despite occasional uncertainties in the use of technical terms, they are developing good understanding of how writers use language to gain literary effects. Because they are confident in relationships with teachers and with each other they are able to explore ideas and offer possible interpretations. Purposeful attitudes linked to good humour contribute to good achievement. Interpretative and analytical writing are above average and some creative work is excellent. Students demonstrate a strong ability to think for themselves and to arrive at their own conclusions.

206 Students in Year 13 overall are less confident in discussion and expressing opinions despite opportunities offered in class. Evidence of work seen shows that overall they are meeting targets based on earlier attainment. They work willingly and respond well to teachers' guidance. These skills were evident in an inquiry into evidence of stress in speech recorded in literature or on television. Writing is clear, generally well organised and opinions are supported by evidence. Some students do not provide sufficient detail in their responses to the questions set.

207 The quality of teaching and learning is good and is often very good. Teachers start lessons in a lively manner and sustain a crisp pace throughout. They make very good use of questions to confirm and to extend understanding. Open-ended questions permit all students to contribute to discussion appropriately to their individual abilities. The frequency with which teachers ask challenging supplementary questions illustrates their determination to help students clarify and develop their thinking. Lessons are well structured with good links to previous and future work. Students understand how their written work is assessed and benefit from teachers' comments. They learn from matching their presentations on set texts against criteria used by examiners. Very good relationships between teachers and students contribute to effective teaching and learning.

208 The course is very well managed. Students benefit from being taught by a highly skilled and very knowledgeable team. There is a consistency of teaching style and of expectation that reinforces students' understanding of how they can succeed and encourages enjoyment as well as hard work. A good range of well-chosen and often exciting resources supports lessons.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

209 In the sixth form most students have good communication skills as shown in their well-argued essays for general studies and in some outstanding writing in English. In media and business studies there are examples of teachers providing a good clear focus to help students to apply technical terminology to their own writing. They can also explain their products using correct vocabulary. However, the more laboured writing of some students studying art and design and vocational courses shows the value of developing the key skills of literacy further at this level. At the same time history students are hesitant in talking about their work and do not have enough insight into writing techniques to meet requirements for higher grades.

Modern foreign languages

210 The inspection focus was on German, which is reported on in full below. French was sampled.

211 **French** results at A/S and A-Levels were above average in 2004. In Years 12 and 13, standards are consistently above average and all students achieve well. Teaching and learning are very good, and students' have very good attitudes to learning. In the better-taught lesson, students used French competently, taking the teacher's own excellent use of French as their model.

German

Provision in German is **good**

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are rising and students' achievement is good.
- Students have excellent attitudes to the German language and culture.
- Teachers have excellent language competence and use this effectively in lessons.
- Students now receive very good guidance on how to perform well in examinations.
- Examination results are not yet high enough.

Commentary

212 In the current Year 13, the students reach average standards, and their achievement is good. Their files show that they reach average standards in reading for understanding; they respond to authentic texts in German and they increasingly deduce the meaning of unfamiliar, specialist words. Listening skills are good as a result of the teachers' consistent and fluent use of German in lessons. Written essays are good when supported by teachers' guidance; and when students independently research German websites, for example on the legalisation of cannabis. However, in speaking, students are often hesitant because they cannot easily recall tenses and sometimes lack confidence in speaking at length; however, they benefit from well-organised practice with the German assistant, and with each other.

213 In the current Year 12, standards are higher; they are average but rapidly improving. All students achieve well. Students make good progress in listening and speaking; they can understand the teachers' fluent German and respond confidently with good pronunciation, as in a discussion on future careers. Students understand the challenging reading texts and recordings of young German speakers. In writing, most successfully incorporate authentic language and specialist vocabulary into essays in both years, most students successfully develop the key skills of communication, working with others, and using ICT.

214 In 2004, no students were entered for German at A-level; at AS level in 2004, results were well below average. This continues a trend of low numbers taking German and below average results. Retention rates on the courses are satisfactory.

215 Teaching and learning in all the lessons seen were very good. The teachers have excellent subject knowledge, being native or fluent speakers of German; this gives students an excellent appreciation, and a love of the German language and culture, and develops very good relationships with their teachers. Teachers' good lesson planning and clear objectives, linked to examination requirements, enable all students to make good progress, especially in Year 12. Teachers use resources very well, so students make maximum progress as in a very good Year 13 lesson, the teacher skilfully used PowerPoint to clarify

the use of the subjunctive. Teachers mark work regularly and thoroughly, and clearly link this to examination criteria; consequently, students are fully aware of their targets and progress.

216 Leadership and management are very good. The departmental head leads by very good example in teaching; and data are used effectively to raise standards. Standards in examinations are not yet high enough, and numbers are currently low. There has been satisfactory improvement since the previous inspection. Because of very good standards and teaching in Years 10 and 11, there is a substantial increase in numbers, especially boys, interested in taking the AS course in 2005/6.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve well because of good teaching and their own positive attitudes to learning.
- There is good provision for able mathematicians who attain well above average standards.
- Good leadership and management evaluate results and act to improve them.
- Some lower attaining students in Year 12 are struggling to achieve a pass grade at AS level.

Commentary

217 A-level results in 2004 were average, and better than in 2003. In most years there is a 100 per cent pass rate in Year 13 at A-level. All students taking further mathematics in 2004 gained high grades, similar to further mathematics' results in previous years. A/S results in 2004 and 2003 were below average, and a number of lower attaining students did not pass.

218 The standards of work seen during the inspection are average, with high attainers reaching well above average standards. These students build on their strong foundation from GCSE and make rapid progress across all parts of their course. They are able to synthesise their existing skills and quickly select appropriate strategies for solution. The extra lessons for further mathematics are a key factor in helping these students to increase their understanding and skills. Average attainers can use their skills in algebra successfully to support their work in mechanics and statistics. Lower attainers have weak algebraic skills, which slows their progress in other aspects, for example in using partial fractions to solve integration questions.

219 Predictions for AS results, based on GCSE results, indicate that standards on entry for the current Year 12 are below average.

220 The work seen, and discussions with students, shows that achievement for most of them is good. However, a small number of lower attaining students in Year 12 do not achieve well enough. They find it difficult to make enough sustainable progress. Although teachers provide extra help, the A/S course is not suitable for these students. The school is considering very carefully how to expand post-16 provision better to suit such students. The problem is partly the result of the department's success, as the main focus of specialist status, in raising standards in the main school, so more want to study mathematics post-16.

221 There are more male students than female studying mathematics. However there is little difference in standards of written work seen or in participation in class, by gender or by ethnic background.

222 Teaching and learning are consistently good, with some that is very good. Teachers are knowledgeable subject specialists. Teaching is clear and well structured, and ICT is used increasingly to develop ideas and provide a focus for discussion. An example of this was using graphs of different functions to guide the introduction of new methods of integration in a Year 13 class. This strategy worked well, helping students to learn effectively. Relationships between students and teachers, and between students, are very good. This provides an environment in which students are prepared to take an active part in discussions, helping them to develop their reasoning skills. In the best teaching, very good use of a wide variety of methods such as paired work, quick feedback via mini whiteboards, and short investigations involve students very effectively in their learning. Assessment is used well to track students' progress and to help them improve. Students, rightly, feel they are taught well and that teachers are approachable and willing to provide extra help.

223 Leadership and management are good; key curriculum issues have been identified and appropriate action is being taken. The retention rate between Years 12 and 13 has improved as a result. A different curriculum for Year 12 lower attainers is under discussion.

224 There was not enough information about post-16 provision in the previous report to make a judgement on progress since that inspection.

Mathematics across the curriculum

225 Students have a good knowledge of mathematics as a result of their work in the main school. They use these skills well in their post-16 studies, and this helps them to make good progress in these courses. In business studies, students can interpret break-even graphs and understand profit and loss calculations. They can manipulate formulae in physics and solve a range of equations. In all subjects they have good skills in data handling, analysing and interpreting data given in a variety of ways.

SCIENCE

226 The focus of the inspection was on physics, which is reported on below. Chemistry and biology were sampled.

227 In a very good Year 12 **chemistry** lesson, the teacher used a combination of computer modelling and demonstration to describe the nature of inter-molecular forces, including hydrogen bonding. Students achieved well using their new knowledge to identify different forms of molecular attraction at work in different compounds.

228 In a satisfactory Year 12 **biology** lesson, students handled materials and equipment competently when investigating the effects of an enzyme (catalase) on the decomposition rate of hydrogen peroxide solution. They achieved satisfactorily in planning their investigation and in interpreting their results.

Physics

Provision in physics is **very good**

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The students achieve very well by Year 13 and have mature attitudes to learning, but some do not understand how to improve on their target grades.
- The quality of teaching and learning is very good.
- The teachers make good use of assessment data.
- The teachers and students use ICT well to enhance learning.
- The department is very well led and managed.

Commentary

229 The GCE A-level examination results in 2004 were well below those of other schools nationally. The proportion of students gaining higher grades, A and B, was half the national average and all students gained a pass. In the 2003 examinations, all students gained a pass but the number of students gaining higher level passes was below that of 2004. In the A/S level examinations the proportion of students achieving both higher level and A-E passes was above the national average and a slight improvement on the previous year. Because of variations in the proportions of male and female students and the size of cohort, gender comparisons are difficult to make.

230 Standards are rising. In lessons, Year 13 students achieve very well and the above average standards they attain are higher than those reflected in recent examinations. This results from very good teaching and students' mature attitudes to learning. In a Year 13 lesson, very good planning and high teacher expectations enabled students to achieve very well using computers to calculate escape velocities. Most students, by the end of Year 13, have a good grasp of the duality of matter and use this knowledge effectively to describe how different types of electron microscope work. In a very good Year 12 lesson, students made good use of their prior knowledge to a problem about the internal resistance of a cell.

231 The quality of teaching is very good. Teachers have very good subject knowledge, which they use well in exposition and rigorous questioning. Homework is often used well to reinforce learning. Students learn very well because the pace of lessons is brisk and teachers use resources, such as computers, very well. Teaching and learning are frequently enhanced by the very effective use of computers during lessons. Since the time

of the previous inspection the quality of teaching has been maintained and the use of ICT further developed.

232 Assessment procedures are good and formally assessed work is marked well. The use of assessment data to monitor students' progress is well established and helps students to stay on course. However, some students are not clear about how they might improve their target grades.

Leadership and management are very good. The head of department provides a very good teaching role model and has created a good sense of teamwork and shared aims, which is very well underpinned by thorough organisation and high expectations. The department enjoys the benefits of having recruited well-qualified and enthusiastic teachers. Since the time of the previous inspection improvement has been good.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

233 One **ICT** lesson was sampled in Year 13. Good, well planned teaching and good learning on the AVCE course were leading to students achieving well. The students understood the key questions needed to compose a questionnaire and were able to use different types of question purposefully. Attitudes and work rates were very good.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

234 Students are competent users of ICT, as befits the school's specialist status. They recognise the advantages such status confers in using ICT to help learning. In conversation some high-aspiring prospective students in medicine claimed to have dismissed consideration of grey brick university education, as course contents studied did not give enough prominence to the ICT skills they felt they had. Good use is made of computers in mathematics and science either for research or for presentation. Internet research helps students of German to build up a helpful picture of culture and civilisation. In business studies, a lack of access to computers undermines learning quality. Students themselves make justified complaints that the weight of usage by younger students sometimes denies them access to computers.

HUMANITIES

235 The main focus of the inspection was history, which is reported below. Religious education and geography were also sampled.

236 For those students following GCE AS/A-level **religious education** courses the provision is good. Achievement is good because students are challenged and have high expectations set for them by enthusiastic, committed and professional teachers. In 2004 the results of Year 13 students were slightly above the national average, although results for Year 12 students were well below average. The latter have since improved their results and work seen in class indicates continued improvement.

237 Students value the post-16 **geography** curriculum. In 2003 and 2004 students achieved examination results that exceeded the national average for the A-level course. In the current Year 13, students are well motivated and achieve well, because of good teaching. They apply the skills that prepare them for both higher education and future employment. They have clear targets for the forthcoming examination and are confident of achieving them.

History

Provision in history is **unsatisfactory**

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are below average because assessment is not sharp enough.
- Management is unsatisfactory; the work of the department is not checked rigorously enough.
- Teachers' subject knowledge and enthusiasm captivate students' interest and commitment, but most teaching fails to focus enough on developing students' study skills.
- Assessment is too infrequent.

Commentary

238 In 2004 A-level results were well below average. The trend over the last three years is marginally upwards because of slightly more A/B grades, although no boys reached this level and only one student did as well as predicted. Standards of work seen are better, although still below average, boys' achievement is improving. Numbers choosing history in both years have increased substantially and most students continue from Year 12 into Year 13. Analysis of results and targets, aided by the senior leadership team, has led to an alteration in the examination syllabus to one that is more suited to students' interests and needs and is contributing to near average standards in Year 12.

239 Students can identify key ideas in source material and extrapolate significant issues. They develop sound knowledge that is chronologically rooted, and refer across historical periods. They attribute sources and evaluate them according to the accepted scholarly bias of individual authors. Highlighting, annotating, use of bullet points and note-making are done spontaneously because students know they are responsible for building a good revision file. However, they find analysis more difficult when faced with a wide range of articles to consider. Students also lack confidence in expressing a view and using terminology to explore issues at length in oral work.

240 Students know their predicted grade and how to get good marks when practising examination answers. However, there is insufficient, sharply focused dialogue about the history skills required in short or longer pieces of historical writing. Assessment is too infrequent to enable them to closely track the development of strengths and identify any weaknesses.

241 Satisfactory achievement is enhanced because students like history and feel they develop good essay writing skills. Students with special educational needs achieve equally satisfactorily because they have specially produced resources.

242 Teaching and learning are satisfactory. There is some very good practice where students are active partners; learning progresses through challenging paired tasks, matched to specified history skills and referred to intermittently in lessons. At the end of such lessons, students individually present a well-argued commentary on, for example, the legacy of Henry VIII. Teachers' strong subject knowledge and use of colloquialisms and contemporary parallels capture students' interest and they work hard. Most teaching does not sufficiently develop students' speaking skills. The range of devices and tasks for collecting, sorting and applying information is narrow and not embedded as study skills that would allow students to become independent.

243 Satisfactory leadership makes sure all students benefit from the strengths individual teachers offer, boys' achievement is rising. Resources are good. Improvement since the previous inspection is satisfactory. Weaknesses in checking quality meant that management is unsatisfactory. There is no sharing of good practice or dialogue about how quality learning may be guaranteed to create independent, successful students.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

244 The main focus of the inspection was on art and design and media studies, which are reported on in full below. Dance was sampled.

245 Excellent teaching and learning took place in a Year 13 **dance** lesson. Group work and the ability to make quick decisions on presentation were observed as major strengths. Students reached well above average standards.

Art and design

Provision in art and design is **good**

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Effective leadership and management give a good sense of direction.
- Good teaching and learning allow students to develop a personal approach to their work.
- Students are supported well throughout their work.
- Weaknesses in the accommodation limit the work students are able to produce.
- Some explanations of written requirements are too complicated for students.

Commentary

246 Achievement in the sixth form is good overall. Attainment on entry is average. At the end of Year 12 standards of work are average. Achievement in Year 12 is good overall because students are able to explain their work and describe the contribution that work of other artists has made to their own. They give individual presentations to the class; this is a significant factor in helping them to form firm opinions on how their work will develop over the coming weeks. This skill helps to consolidate their thoughts and builds a strong group ethos. All students are supported well throughout, according to needs. At this stage differences between the work of the boys and girls is negligible.

247 At the end of Year 13 the average standard of work is a reflection of the well-designed programme and help provided by teachers. Students in the sixth form spend a lot of time developing their work independently outside of their normal lessons, although this is limited by the lack of a dedicated base where their work can be permanently displayed and materials easily accessed. Achievement in Year 13 is good. Students use subject specific language with confidence, understanding words and phrases such as 'symbolism', 'abstract' and 'interpretation of an image'. They understand the visual language and demonstrate this through their use of a wide range of media in their work. On occasions, writing frailties undermine achievement.

248 Good teaching and learning encourage independence among students who are clearly producing work that reflects their own interests. Students' concentration is good and all are fully prepared for work. Students are very well supported in both the intellectual dimension of their work as well as the making of their artwork. Good quality, detailed

assessment informs students clearly how to make progress. A wide range of materials helps them to work in different styles and art forms. On the other hand, detailed teaching of the personal study part of the programme does not achieve all that it attempts because dialogue is often too complex for most of the group and there is not enough time for students to fully understand the examples.

249 Leadership is good. There is a good sense of direction in the work of the department. The quality of teaching is being monitored satisfactorily. Management is good. Since the previous inspection the department has made good progress. The number of students opting for the subject has increased significantly in the lower sixth and looks to increase further in coming years.

Media studies

Provision in media studies is **very good**

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are very high and amongst the best in the school.
- Very positive relationships between teachers and students encourage industry and commitment of a high order.
- Students are very articulate and use correct media terminology in explanations.
- Practical work and the use of ICT are very good.
- Students show less confidence in the theory than in the practical aspects of the course.

Commentary

250 Students achieve very well in both A/S and A-level examinations with over two thirds gaining the higher grades A or B. This is very high in comparison with similar schools. Not all have studied the subject at GCSE but they quickly learn the new terminology and are able to incorporate it into their thinking when planning practical projects.

251 No teaching was observed because half the students and a member of staff were out of school for the week of the inspection on a media related residential experience. In discussions with students and staff it is clear that there is a great deal of commitment to work by all concerned. Students expressed appreciation for the support they receive and the marking seen in folders supported this. Practical work in both Years 12 and 13 is very good with younger students producing good quality reproductions showing that they have applied theoretical knowledge of the various techniques of the media. They can debate controversial issues such as censorship and film classification. Their research is wide and conclusive using the knowledge gleaned from their teachers, the Internet and audience questionnaires to come to their own conclusions about how best to design a product. Evaluations are usually expressed in a clear and cogent manner.

252 Teamwork is good in both Year 12 and 13 and all students have good skills in ICT and numeracy. They show a critical awareness of social and cultural issues in their studies on situation comedy and explain well how history and context influence media decisions. They also see how media agencies exploit and manipulate audiences and are clear about the moral implications.

253 Students are articulate and very clear about their progress in the subject. They work hard and have produced very good short video films showing their ability to apply complex technical compositions. They use their growing technical competence to experiment with various devices to improve visual effects such as pause, camera-angle, flashback and screen captions. They even notice continuity defects while showing their films and have the skills to edit these. Written work varies from very good to satisfactory with strengths in analysis and evaluation of their own work. Some students were less

secure on their knowledge of media institutions and their economic and political significance. This is a very successful and popular course that is very well led and competently managed with good facilities and a visually attractive teaching room.

BUSINESS

Business education

Provision in business education is **satisfactory**

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Assessment is used well to help students improve.
- The students' positive attitudes to work enhance their learning, although poor attendance among GNVQ students undermines achievement for some.
- The very good curriculum meets the needs of students of all abilities.
- Higher attaining students do not always have enough challenge to raise achievement.
- Lack of access to ICT during lessons hinders learning.
- Very good links with industry provide students with a first-hand context for learning.

Commentary

254 The school provides a very good range of business courses with no restrictions on entry and this meets the needs of students very well. Standards overall are average. In the GNVQ all foundation students achieved a pass grade, and most intermediate students achieved either a pass or merit grade. Results in the advanced vocational business (VCE) fell in 2004 reflecting the school's lower GCSE results in 2002, there were no higher grades and the results overall were average. VCE is more popular with boys than girls, although girls' results are better than those of boys. Continuity between Year 12 and Year 13 is satisfactory.

255 Achievement across all courses is satisfactory. Students make good progress from their previous low levels of achievement, although progress overall is limited because of GNVQ students' unsatisfactory attendance. Many VCE students have lower than average grades at GCSE and achievement is satisfactory. Most VCE students have positive attitudes to work and benefit from good teacher support to make a structured start to advanced portfolio work. However a small group of boys in Year 12 do not yet work with sufficient urgency. A small group of able students in Year 13 achieve well because of their determined attitudes. They use assessment criteria to help them reach higher grades and benefit from their teacher's high expectations.

256 Teaching is satisfactory. Teachers are deployed well and use their good subject knowledge to enable students build knowledge across a broad range of business concepts. Single and double award students are taught together for some units, and double award students make better progress because of their wider knowledge base. The approach to target setting is inconsistent especially at the start of some coursework units and some students do not aspire to the higher levels of which they are capable. Teachers provide good support to enhance learning through individual student reviews of coursework. GNVQ students benefit from their teachers' careful structuring of theory and encouragement of oral contribution to lessons and this builds confidence. Some VCE lessons are too strongly directed, and there is not always enough challenge for more able students in particular to develop their oral responses to questions on marketing and customer service. Year 13 students respond very well to strong challenge and this leads to a very good understanding of international trade. Written work is marked thoroughly; there is clear guidance for improvement of business content and standards of literacy, so that students can redraft work to reach higher grades.

257 The acting head of department is committed to improvement and leads the team of teachers well. The previous head of department monitors teaching formally. There are good opportunities for the team to work together to share and develop issues, although there is not enough focus on developing a wider range of teaching styles. Staff and students work well together using effective assessment procedures to improve coursework. Very good links with local industry enable students to learn from first-hand enquiry and apply their knowledge in real world contexts. Laptop computers were available in one lesson for a small group of students however there is not enough access to ICT in lessons for larger groups of students to carry out research and present their coursework within lessons.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

258 The main focus of the inspection was health and social care at AS level (VCE), which it is reported fully below. The Year 12 GNVQ course in health and social care was also sampled.

259 The GNVQ course in Year 12 **health and social care** is well matched to the ability and interests of students. Students are achieving well and reaching average standards. They are developing a good understanding of care values, for example, when working with children. Work placements significantly help to increase students' understanding of the course. Teaching fully meets the needs of individual students.

Health and social care

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve very well.
- The quality of teaching and learning is very good.
- The subject is very well led and managed.
- There is very good collaboration between the school and local providers of care.

Commentary

260 The vocational certificate in education for health and social care is provided for Year 12 students for the first time this year. The course is well matched to the needs and interests and is suitably challenging for them.

261 Standards of attainment in Year 12 are average. This represents very good achievement. For many students it is their first experience of the course. Others, who did a course in Year 11, continue to build on their experience and knowledge of the subject and to achieve very well. This is because they benefit from very good teaching and have mature attitudes to learning, particularly when they consider sensitive issues concerned with care of elderly or vulnerable people. Students have adapted very well to the extra rigour of A-level study: they work hard and persevere to understand complex documents and policies, which inform care values. They learn effectively about these issues because class work is followed up with the study of policy into practice when students have placements in local establishments such as nurseries and care homes for the elderly. Students show insight into the demanding work of carers and the personal and organisational qualities they need. The most able students are highly articulate in discussion and extract key information efficiently from policies. A few students are too dependent on the teacher to help them. Many students have weak oral skills when presenting information to an audience and their writing, though it shows understanding, tends to lack style and fluency.

262 The quality of teaching and learning is very good. Teachers have very good knowledge of the course and of how students learn. The best principles of vocational course teaching are used and enable students to learn very effectively through research, group work and practical application of their learning. Very good relationships have been established between students and teachers that lead to high levels of co-operation and confident expression of opinions.

263 Leadership and management are very good. There is excellent co-operation between all those who contribute to teaching the subject. Staff are very keen to enrich the experience of students and to raise their aspirations and standards. Teachers and other staff provide very good role models for students which helps with their personal as well as academic development.

264 The community business liaison officer has developed a wide range of links with local establishments so that students are given placements that provide them with experiences that precisely match their learning needs and that support their examination coursework requirements.

PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT AND GENERAL PROGRAMMES

General studies

265 In 2004, results in **general studies** at AS and A-Levels were below average. Staffing difficulties, which contributed in part to these results, have now been resolved, and the course is currently undergoing re-organisation. In the sampled lessons, teaching and learning were satisfactory overall, and students generally had good attitudes to their work. In well-taught lessons, students successfully developed essay writing skills and knowledge of examination criteria through giving and assessing each other's presentations on essay topics. In the occasional unsatisfactorily taught lesson, poorly prepared work failed to stimulate a satisfactory response from the students who failed to reveal any appreciation of the rationale underlying or knowledge of the operation of the welfare state.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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

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