

INSPECTION REPORT

SANDWICH TECHNOLOGY SCHOOL

Sandwich

LEA area: Kent

Unique reference number: 118935

Headteacher: Mr R Wallis

Lead inspector: Mrs M J Kerry

Dates of inspection: 24th - 27th January 2005

Inspection number: 268904

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Secondary modern
School category: Foundation
Age range of pupils: 11-18
Gender of pupils: Mixed
Number on roll: 1,183

School address: Deal Road
Sandwich
Kent
Postcode: CT13 0BU

Telephone number: (01304) 610 000
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Appropriate authority: The governing body
Name of chair of Mr P Higson
governors:

Date of previous 18th January 1999
inspection:

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Sandwich Technology School is a mixed 11-18 secondary modern Foundation school with Specialist Technology Status. The school is larger than average, heavily over-subscribed and has expanded significantly since the last inspection. Selection to grammar schools operates in the local area, with approximately the top 33 per cent of students being selected by ability at age 11. Attainment on entry is below average, with few high attaining students. In a typical cohort, a well below average proportion of students will have achieved Level 5, and very few or none will have achieved Level 6 in the national tests for pupils at age 11. The sixth form is smaller than average. About three-quarters of students in Year 11 continue in full-time education, either at Sandwich or elsewhere, and the school is working with partner organisations to raise staying on rates in this area of Kent. Attainment on entry to the sixth form is well below that which would usually be seen. Socio-economic circumstances are below average, with some local communities deprived following the demise of the local mining industry. The proportion of students with special educational needs is above average, and the percentage of students with statements of special educational need is average. There are very few students who have English as an additional language, and a small number who are travellers or in public care. The school population is predominantly white (98 per cent) with small numbers of students of Asian, mixed and Black heritage. The school has received numerous awards including Achievement Awards, Artsmark Gold, Sportsmark, the Healthy Eating Award, and Investors in People. In 2004 the school received a Specialist Schools Trust value added and most improved award.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

| Members of the inspection team | | | Subject responsibilities |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------|----------------|---|
| 9931 | Mrs M J Kerry | Lead inspector | |
| 9736 | Mr J Brasier | Lay inspector | |
| 12475 | Mr S Johnson | Team inspector | Music |
| 2739 | Mr I Benson | Team inspector | Geography Sociology |
| 12844 | Mr M Saunders | Team inspector | English |
| 20527 | Mr B King | Team inspector | Mathematics |
| 15075 | Mr B Goodman-Stephens | Team inspector | Modern foreign languages English as an additional language |
| 23268 | Dr K Corrigan | Team inspector | Business education Leisure and recreation |
| 4451 | Mr R Howarth | Team inspector | Religious education Citizenship |
| 15590 | Mrs S Slocombe | Team inspector | Physical education Special educational needs |
| 12356 | Mr R Dickason | Team inspector | Science |
| 33368 | Mrs V Greatrex | Team inspector | Design and technology |
| 19152 | Mr R Merryfield | Team inspector | History |
| 31385 | Mr N Gillespie | Team inspector | Information and communication technology |
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

This is a very effective school which gives its students a very good quality of education. Standards are above average by the end of Year 11, and students' achievement is very good. Standards are below average in the sixth form, but this represents good achievement from the students' starting points. Teaching and learning are very good. Leadership and management are outstanding, and bringing about rapid and sustained improvement. The school gives very good value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The headteacher's values and vision of excellence pervade the work of the school.
- Outstanding self-evaluation and continual review identify weaknesses and target successful intervention to bring about improvement.
- High quality teaching enables students to achieve very well.
- A vibrant and inclusive ethos is based on learning and achievement for all.
- Excellent use is made of ICT to support learning.
- Highly motivated students are self-directed and confident learners.
- The curriculum successfully prepares all students for the next stage of their lives.
- Very effective procedures are used to monitor quality and support and develop all staff.
- Highly effective systems for reviewing progress help students to fulfil their potential.
- The work of the governing body is excellent in supporting improvement.
- The sixth form offers its students a good quality of education.

The school has made very good progress since the last inspection. Results at the end of Year 11 have improved from well below to above the national average for all schools. The achievement of students with special educational needs has improved, as has the provision for developing students' literacy skills. The competence of students in using information and communication technology (ICT) is now outstanding. The quality of teaching has improved, and there is now a significant amount which is excellent. The curriculum has opened up new pathways to meet students' needs, and extensive and imaginative building programmes and investment in ICT have transformed the learning environment. Leadership and management are now outstanding, have developed highly effective procedures for monitoring and improving quality, and for developing the potential of all staff.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

Key: A – well above average; B – above average; C – average; D – below average; E – well below average.
For Year 11, similar schools are those with a similar proportion of free school meals.

Students reach above average standards and achievement is very good. At the end of Year 9, standards are in line overall with what is expected nationally. This represents very good achievement from starting points which are below average, and often well below average. Overall results in English, mathematics and science are likely to be in line with the

national average in 2004. By the end of Year 11, standards are above average, which again represents very good achievement. Standards are rising at the end of Year 11 and the rate of improvement is above that achieved nationally. Results in GCSE/GNVQ in 2004 were a marked improvement on those for 2003. When compared to the results of other secondary modern schools, the school's results were in the top five per cent nationally. The proportion of students gaining five or more A* to C grades was above the national average for all schools. Achievement is very good in mathematics, science, design and technology, geography, physical education and religious education; it is good in English, art, business education, history, music and modern foreign languages. In citizenship, achievement is satisfactory. Students' competence in the use of ICT is excellent, and achievement in ICT is outstanding. All students achieve very well, including those who have special or additional educational needs, those who are gifted and talented, and those with English as an additional language. In the sixth form, students make good progress, often from low starting points. Standards in the sixth form are below average overall, but above average on some vocational courses. Achievement is good, and often very good, on vocational courses. In the subjects inspected in detail, achievement is good in mathematics, business education and music. It is unsatisfactory in English, due mainly to staffing difficulties, but very good in science, ICT, leisure and recreation, and sociology.

Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good. Personal development is well supported by the outstanding range of extra-curricular and enrichment activities and by a well-planned programme of regular assemblies. Students' attitudes and behaviour are very good. Attendance is good, and improving. The school has an excellent ethos, firmly based on the principle of learning and achievement for all.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education provided is very good. Students quickly become confident and independent learners who are skilled users of ICT. **The quality of teaching is very good in both the main school and sixth form.** Much of the teaching makes high demands on students and they respond with enthusiasm and commitment. Examples of excellent and very good teaching were seen in most subjects. Where there is weaker teaching, as in French and aspects of English, the departments concerned are already receiving support and challenge from senior managers in order to bring about improvement. Students receive very good care, support and guidance. The progress review system is used very successfully to help students raise their achievement. The curriculum is of very good quality and offers students a variety of pathways to success. The range of activities beyond the school day is outstanding. Links with the community, including the international community, are excellent and there is a very effective partnership with parents.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are outstanding. The headteacher is committed to a vision of excellence which transmits itself to staff and students alike. The exceptional partnership between the headteacher and deputy headteacher ensures that the vision becomes a classroom reality. Key staff are very effective leaders. The work of management in bringing about and sustaining change, and in seeking improvement, where this is needed, is excellent. The review of the work of departments is systematic and thorough. The governing body is extremely well informed and challenges the headteacher and senior managers to improve all areas of the school's performance. Governors also contribute generously of their time and own expertise when this is needed. Statutory requirements to provide a daily act of collective worship for all students are not met in full, and there are some omissions from the reporting of examination results to parents.

PARENTS' AND STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents and students are very well satisfied with the school. Both have the opportunity to express their views through annual surveys. The school takes note both of praise and concerns, and reports back on what action will be taken.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

In the context of what is already a highly effective school, senior management should continue the support for English and French to ensure students' achievement reaches the high levels achieved in other subjects;

and, to meet statutory requirements:

- Move further towards meeting in full the requirement to provide a daily act of collective worship for all students.
- Include national averages when reporting to parents the results of Year 9 national tests, GCSE/GNVQ and AS, A2 and AVCE examinations.

THE SIXTH FORM AT SANDWICH TECHNOLOGY SCHOOL

This is a smaller than average sixth form that serves a largely rural area surrounding Sandwich. It provides AS, A2 and vocational courses.

OVERALL EVALUATION

The overall effectiveness of the sixth form is good. Although standards are below average, students are very well taught and achieve well. In some vocational courses, standards are above average. Results are showing some improvement. Students have very good attitudes to their work. They have access to a very broad curriculum and excellent enrichment opportunities. Leadership and management are very good. The overall provision is cost effective and operates within its budget.

The main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Teaching and learning are of very good quality and enable students to achieve well.
- Students benefit from a broad curriculum of very good quality.
- Learning is supported by significant access to ICT and is complemented by excellent enrichment opportunities.
- Students enjoy very productive relationships with their peers and their teachers, and show great maturity as they work with younger students in major leadership roles.
- Students generously contribute to, as well as benefit from, the school's life, work and success.
- Leadership has identified clear priorities for further improvement.

QUALITY AND STANDARDS IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES OF THE CURRICULUM

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

| Curriculum area | Evaluation |
|--|--|
| English, languages and communication - English | Unsatisfactory. Teaching and learning are currently satisfactory. Results are poor; achievement and leadership and management are unsatisfactory. |
| Mathematics | Good. Standards are below average but achievement is good. Teaching and learning are good, as are leadership and management. |

| | |
|--|---|
| Science | Very good. Standards are above average and achievement is very good. Teaching and learning, as well as leadership and management, are very good. |
| Information and communication technology | Very good. Very good teaching and learning, as well as excellent leadership and very good management, lead to above average standards and very good achievement. |
| Humanities - Sociology | Good. Standards are average but good teaching and learning result in high achievement. Leadership and management are good. |
| Visual and performing arts and media - Music | Good. Standards are below average but good teaching and learning result in good achievement. Leadership and management are good. |
| Hospitality, sports, leisure and travel – Leisure and recreation | Very good. Very good teaching and learning result in high achievement and above average standards. Leadership and management are very good. |
| Business | Good. Good teaching and learning result in good achievement and standards that are average. Leadership is very good and management is good. |

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

ADVICE, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

The provision in this area of the school's work is good. Both form tutors and subject or course teachers provide good guidance regarding each student's attainment and progress, based on a detailed monitoring and tracking system and the results of detailed marking of assignments. This feedback helps students to formulate appropriate targets for improvement in the standard and quality of their work. There are plans to implement an even more rigorous approach to the progress review system that takes greater account of both students' academic and personal development.

The school is very concerned that currently there is no external careers adviser to assist students in making decisions regarding their future aspirations. In the meantime, some students have taken the initiative to use a number of Internet websites to gain further specialist information.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE SIXTH FORM

The governing body has identified a well-conceived strategic role for the sixth form. A clear educational rationale for meeting the learning needs of all students is provided through the very effective leadership given by the headteacher, senior leadership team and sixth form director. Clear priorities for the further development of the sixth form have been identified within the school's own self-evaluation procedures. Very good leadership is provided within subjects and courses, as well as through the work of operational managers and form tutors.

The sixth form provision is carefully monitored to assure quality and to ensure that it operates within its budget. As a result, the cost effectiveness of the sixth form is good.

STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Students are proud to be members of this inclusive school community. They value the opportunities the school has provided for them to be successful learners and to gain in confidence and maturity. They feel that they are well taught, have generous access to staff, benefit from opportunities to be independent learners and have unlimited use of ICT

facilities. Inspection evidence supports these views, as well as the students' concern about the lack of external careers advice. However, the opinion of a minority of students that they are not treated with respect or have their views heard and acted upon is not supported by inspectors. Relationships, based on mutual respect, are of a high order and inspection evidence showed that students' views (and those of their parents) are heard, through the school's questionnaires and other less formal channels. These responses are analysed and acted upon.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE MAIN INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY STUDENTS

Standards achieved in subjects and courses

Standards of attainment are in line with expectations at the end of Year 9, and are above average by the end of Year 11. Students' achievement is very good. Standards are below average in the sixth form, but this represents good achievement from the students' starting points.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve highly.
- Competence in the use of ICT is excellent, and is a major factor supporting high achievement.
- In 2004, results at GCSE and GNVQ placed the school in the top five per cent of secondary. modern schools nationally.
- The school is highly effective in the subject areas included within its specialist status.
- Standards at the end of Year 11 are rising at a rate faster than that seen nationally.
- The achievement of sixth form students is good, particularly in vocational courses.
- Standards are relatively weaker in English in Years 10 and 11 and post-16, and in French.

Commentary

1. Students enter the school with below average levels of attainment. In terms of the higher levels in National Curriculum tests, attainment is well below average, and very few students are high attaining, due to the selection process operating in the local area. An above average proportion also have special educational needs, or are in need of some other form of support.
2. By the end of Year 9, standards are in line with expectations. In 2004, overall results of national tests in English, mathematics and science are likely to be in line with the national average. Analysis of the work of students across the whole curriculum confirmed this picture of attainment, which is in line with expectations. This represents very good achievement from these students' starting points. The overall trend is in line with that seen nationally.

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

| Standards in: | School results | National results |
|---------------|----------------|------------------|
| English | 33.1 (30.3) | N/a (33.4) |
| mathematics | 34.5 (33.6) | N/a (35.4) |
| science | 31.3 (31.5) | N/a (33.6) |

There were 211 students in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

3. Standards of attainment are above average by the end of Year 11. The school's most recent results at GCSE and GNVQ were impressive. Average points score was above the national average for all schools. Bearing in mind that this is a secondary modern school, this is a significant achievement. Measures based on A* to G grades were well

above national averages, and the proportion of students gaining five or more A* to C grades was above the national average: this represents very good progress from attainment on entry, when very few students are higher attaining. Current Year 11 students are not attaining quite such high standards as last year's results would suggest, but their attainment on entry was weaker than that of the previous cohort, and this does not therefore indicate any decline in standards. When results are compared with those from other secondary modern schools, the school's results are in the top five per cent nationally.

4. Standards are rising at the end of Year 11 and the rate of improvement is above that seen nationally. Results in 2004 were a marked improvement on those for 2003, which were in line with the national average, and 2003 results improved on those for 2002, which were below the national average. In both 2003 and 2004, there was a significant increase in the proportion of students gaining five or more A* to C grades. At the time of the last inspection, the average points score was well below the national average - it is now above the national average. The strength in the proportion of students gaining pass grades, already evident at the last inspection, has been maintained. In addition, the proportion of students gaining five or more A* to C grades has increased from 29 per cent to 64 per cent. This is very good progress since the last inspection.

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

| | School results | National results |
|---|----------------|------------------|
| Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-C grades | 64 (51) | 52 (52) |
| Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-G grades | 99 (100) | 89 (88) |
| Percentage of pupils gaining 1 or more A*-G grades | 100 (100) | 96 (96) |
| Average point score per pupil (best eight subjects) | 34.7 (34.0) | 34.9 (34.7) |

There were 201 students in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

5. Students' achievement is very good in Years 7 to 9 and in Years 10 and 11. Value added indicators show that achievement is well above average at the end of Year 9 and the end of Year 11. The school's value added from Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 4 was the second highest in Kent in 2004, including both selective and non-selective schools. Achievement is satisfactory in citizenship, good in music, French, business education, art and English: in mathematics, science, design and technology, geography, physical education and religious education, achievement is very good. In ICT, it is excellent. The school has made very good use of its specialist technology status to raise achievement in the areas of science, mathematics, design and technology and ICT.
6. Standards and achievement are relatively weaker in aspects of English (particularly English language results) in Years 10 and 11, and in French. In a school where high performance from departments is very much the expectation, these areas have already been identified by senior management for support and intervention. This is already leading to improvements in French, but this is less the case in English, where long-term staffing difficulties are impeding progress.
7. As well as teaching which is of very good quality, effective support and intervention by leaders and managers, and the provision of courses well suited to the students' needs, other factors help to raise achievement. Since the last inspection,

arrangements to support the development of students' literacy skills have been much improved and are now very good. Students develop the skills they need, both in literacy and numeracy, to support their study. Even more significant, however, in raising achievement, is the high level of competence which students have in the use of ICT as a tool to aid learning.

Example of outstanding practice

Innovation in the use of ICT across the curriculum develops excellent competence in students' use of ICT as learners and helps them to achieve highly.

The school is justly proud of its pioneering use of ICT in many subjects to enhance the learning experience of the students. Students are encouraged right from Year 7 to think of ICT as a tool that will help them in all areas of their study, and this principle is put consistently into practice. Consequently, students of all abilities become highly skilled and confident users of ICT. There are numerous projects across the curriculum which utilise ICT in highly effective ways. These include e-learning in Year 7 to help students advance in numeracy, reading and spelling, and working pneumatic, electronic and mechanical models linked to computers, which add interest and excitement to design and technology. The science department has highly innovative and superbly organised teaching materials which make excellent use of ICT to provide students with a wide range of research and other opportunities for independent learning. As a result of these and other examples of creative use, students become self-assured learners whose achievement is very good.

8. The recent appointment of a director for inclusion to oversee provision for the range of vulnerable students in the school reflects the importance that the headteacher and governing body place on ensuring that the needs of all students are identified and met. Wherever possible, the school admits students with special or additional educational needs from its partner schools.
9. Students with special or additional educational needs make very good progress and achieve as well, and in some subjects better, than their peers. This is an improvement since the last inspection. Information from partner schools and the results of diagnostic tests are used to identify the students' learning requirements so that appropriate measures can be put in place. Support from specialist teachers and assistants is very effective in helping to raise students' confidence and self-esteem, and in providing them with the skills to cope with their work in lessons. Although targets on individual education plans (IEPs) provide a focus for improvement, they are not specific enough to be helpful in measuring students' progress.
10. The high quality central programme for gifted and talented students is very well planned and organised. It provides opportunities for these students to broaden their thinking, expand their knowledge and understanding, and gain additional qualifications. Both the progress and the achievement of gifted and talented students are very good.
11. The very few students who have English as an additional language achieve in line with their peers because of very good monitoring and support. The links with outside

agencies and parents are very good. The leadership and management of this aspect of the school's provision are very good. The highly effective monitoring of progress also ensures that students from ethnic minorities, or who are from vulnerable groups, achieve as well as they should.

Sixth form

12. The school is working with other partners to improve staying on rates, which is a priority in this area of Kent. Many of those who enter the sixth form are coming from lower starting points than would usually be the case. Overall attainment on entry to the sixth form is well below what would usually be seen.
13. In 2004, results were well below average. There was, however, improvement from the previous year in both GCE A level and AVCE results. In Year 13, both the proportion of A/B grades and A/E grades improved. At A2, A/B grades improved significantly for both boys and girls. In AVCE, the overall pass rate improved and was above the national average, with 100 per cent of girls passing. Although the overall average points score was still well below average, this included some AS results where pass rates were much lower.
14. A picture of improvement was confirmed by the standards seen in subjects inspected in detail, and in those sampled. Standards are below average overall, taking account both of the most recent results and work scrutinised or seen in class. Standards in work scrutinised are in line with expectations in ICT, business education and sociology; they are above expectations in science (vocational) and leisure and recreation, but below expectations in mathematics, music and English. The higher standards are seen in the vocational courses. Taking account of the various starting points of students on each course, achievement is good overall and very good in science, ICT, sociology, and leisure and recreation. There was also evidence from lessons sampled of very good achievement in a range of other subject areas such as health and social care, including high achievement in performing arts. In English achievement is unsatisfactory, because of difficulties with staffing which are not yet fully resolved, and an uneven quality of teaching.
15. The tracking of progress and achievement is not as effective in the sixth form as it is as in the main school. The new director of sixth form has rightly made the introduction of more rigorous predictions and progress measures a priority. Students with special or additional educational needs in the sixth form speak highly of the encouragement and help they receive from the support staff in enabling them to achieve examination grades that meet or exceed their targets.

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 | 89.0 (81.3) | 92.3 (92.3) |
| Percentage of entries gaining A-B grades | 20.4 (13.6) | 36.2 (35.6) |
| Average point score per student | 153.0 (154.5) | 265.2 (258.2) |

There were 37 students in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

16. Since the last inspection there has been very good progress in raising standards, particularly in:

- Results at GCSE and GNVQ which have improved from well below average to above average.
- The achievement of students who have special educational needs which is now very good.
- Much improved arrangements for developing literacy skills; provision is now very good.
- The development of students' competence in the use of ICT, which is now outstanding.

Students' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Students' attitudes and behaviour are very good, as is their personal development, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural aspects. Attendance is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Behaviour in lessons is mostly very good and often excellent.
- Students have very good attitudes and are very keen to learn.
- The students' awareness of other cultures is enriched by the outstanding range of international links which the school has cultivated.
- Excellently presented assemblies make a very strong contribution to the students' spiritual development.

Commentary

17. Students' attitudes are very good. This is reflected in above average attendance and a very good standard of punctuality. Students are keen to learn and show a high level of interest in both lessons and well supported out-of-class activities. They are very willing to take responsibility and do so in such areas as the school council and the many successful charitable activities which they undertake.
18. Standards of behaviour are very good, both in lessons and around the school between lessons and during lunch and break times. In lessons, behaviour is often excellent. Students behave well out of a sense of responsibility rather than because of close supervision. The school's promotion of good relationships is outstanding. Instances of racism are extremely rare and there are very few instances of serious bullying. When these do occur, the school takes very effective and speedy action, involving support from outside agencies where necessary. Permanent exclusions are rare. Temporary exclusions are above average, but are carefully monitored and used very effectively to reinforce the behaviour code, which sets high expectations for the students.
19. A strength of the inclusion department is the team of teaching assistants, who not only support students in class and in the special or additional educational needs base room, but also assist in administrative tasks. Very effective support is provided for those students who have specific learning difficulties by staff with appropriate knowledge and skills. This continues for students who wish to study in the sixth form. Relationships between teachers, assistants and students are very positive and constructive. Students are not afraid to ask for help and to discuss issues that concern them. Very comprehensive procedures are in place for the management of

students with emotional and behavioural difficulties so that disruptions are kept to a minimum. Students with special or additional educational needs are fully included in all activities within the school and their progress is carefully monitored, allowing any problems to be speedily addressed.

20. Although the school still does not fully comply with the statutory requirements for a daily act of collective worship, provision for the students' spiritual development has been improved since the last inspection and is now good. Provision for their moral, social and cultural development have also improved and are very good. There are assemblies several times a week. These explore spiritual and moral issues and are excellently presented, often making most effective use of ICT. Tutorial periods and subjects such as religious education and citizenship also contribute very well to the students' moral and social development. The school council gives the students first-hand experience of the workings of democracy. Their social development is greatly enhanced by the many extra-curricular activities. These involve not only strong links with the local community, but also extensive international links: for example, with schools in Australia, Singapore, South Africa and France. In this way, as well as through study in class, in subjects such as religious education, English, music, art, and modern foreign languages, students are able to learn about and appreciate other cultures. The students are heavily involved in charitable activities and regularly raise large sums of money for a variety of good causes, many of which involve helping people in less economically developed countries.

Attendance

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

| Authorised absence | | Unauthorised absence | |
|--------------------|-----|----------------------|-----|
| School data | 6.5 | School data | 1.1 |
| National data | 6.9 | National data | 1.1 |

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

21. Attendance is good and improving. Attendance in the present academic year has risen to 92.7 per cent and unauthorised absence has fallen to 0.8 per cent. The chief driving force behind the achievement of this improvement is the activity of the families liaison officer, who rigorously ensures that reasons for absence are obtained. This is backed up by an efficient tutor organisation and good collaboration with the education welfare officer.

Exclusions

Ethnic background of students

| Categories used in the Annual School Census |
|---|
| White – British |
| White – Irish |
| White – any other White background |
| Mixed – White and Black Caribbean |

Exclusions in the last school year

| No. of students on roll | Number of fixed period exclusions | Number of permanent exclusions |
|-------------------------|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1161 | 144 | 1 |
| 2 | 0 | 0 |
| 4 | 1 | 0 |
| 1 | 0 | 0 |

| | | | |
|------------------------------------|---|---|---|
| Mixed – White and Asian | 2 | 0 | 0 |
| Asian or Asian British – Indian | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| Black or Black British – Caribbean | 2 | 0 | 0 |
| Any other ethnic group | 2 | 0 | 0 |
| No ethnic group recorded | 8 | 0 | 0 |

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

Sixth form

22. Sixth form students have great pride in their school – and not just because most of them have attended since Year 7. They value the high expectations their teachers have of them, the access and support provided by subject teachers and form tutors and also the wide range of opportunities the school has provided for them to grow as learners and people. The high level of ICT provision is rightly seen as a great help to support the organisation and management of their learning.
23. Students in the sixth form acknowledge the great benefits derived from membership of this highly inclusive school community. They show great maturity in their contributions to its life and work. They respond very positively to the school's ethos, and enjoy highly productive relationships with their peers and teachers. They also relish opportunities to work with younger students as mentors, taking a leadership role in their house or through coaching and supporting others in sport, music and drama. Many are involved in a range of school and community projects, some through membership of Interact – the junior version of The Rotary Club.
24. Sixth form attendance is satisfactory overall, and is better in Year 12 than in Year 13. The new director of the sixth form recognises that, although attendance is satisfactory, a more rigorous approach is needed. Students are, however, very punctual to lessons and, as well as being very involved in their own learning, they readily support others in the group.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education provided is very good. Teaching is of very good quality and students learn very effectively and enthusiastically. Pastoral and tutorial systems are very effective in supporting progress and achievement. Assessment is good. The curriculum provides very good opportunities and is enriched by an outstanding programme of activities beyond the school day. The school has an excellent ethos and is highly inclusive. The views of students are regularly sought, and action is taken as a result.

Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are very good. Assessment is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is very good with a significant amount which is excellent.

- Much of the teaching makes high demands on students, and they respond with enthusiasm.
- Students' competence and confidence as learners mean that good quality teaching can enable them to achieve very well over time.
- The creative use of ICT is fundamental to students' success as learners.
- Recent changes in own learning (homework) are further extending opportunities for students to be independent learners.
- The school's successful use of progress review is crucial to raising the students' achievement.
- Where there is unsatisfactory teaching, this is usually within areas already targeted for improvement.

Commentary

25. The quality of teaching has improved significantly since the last inspection. There is much less that is unsatisfactory, and much more that is of good, very good or excellent quality. Overall, two-fifths of the teaching seen was very good or excellent, and this covered a wide range of subjects. At the last inspection no teaching was seen which was excellent, whereas now a significant amount is of that quality, both in the main school and post-16. The high quality of teaching over time is clearly evident in the school's very much improved results.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 174 lessons

| Excellent | Very good | Good | Satisfactory | Unsatisfactory | Poor | Very poor |
|-----------|-----------|----------|--------------|----------------|--------|-----------|
| 12 (7%) | 59 (34%) | 68 (39%) | 28 (16%) | 7 (4%) | 0 (0%) | 0 (0%) |

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

26. The quality of teaching is very good in both Years 7 to 9 and Years 10 and 11. It is especially strong in Year 10, giving students a good start to their GCSE courses. Although there was a small amount of unsatisfactory teaching, this was predominantly in French, which is already being supported: there was also much teaching in the subject which was good and very good and enabling students to achieve highly.
27. After they enter the school, students rapidly become confident and competent learners. Their motivation is often extremely high. In some science and ICT lessons, for example, students simply did not want the lesson to stop. The way in which they are enabled to use ICT to support learning, including research, means that they take control of their own learning quickly. Because students are so strongly motivated, they learn very effectively from teaching which is good, as well as that which is very good or excellent. This commitment on their part, coupled with effective teaching over time, means that understanding is deepened, and knowledge and skills acquired. A consistent emphasis on high standards of work and behaviour sets a climate of productive and enjoyable work in classes. Students who have English as an additional language, or who belong to vulnerable groups, are well catered for.
28. The quality of teaching is very good in ICT, science, design and technology, geography and PE. Teaching is good in mathematics, English, art, business education, history, music and RE. In citizenship and modern foreign languages, teaching is satisfactory. Teachers have high expectations and the ability to translate

those expectations into work which challenges pupils and deepens understanding. It is this, combined with the students' own competencies as learners, which leads to very good achievement. In many subject lessons, there is evidence of tasks and activities planned specifically to extend gifted and talented students, although this is not the case in all.

29. The high quality of teaching and learning is sustained by very effective induction, performance management and professional development . This is evaluated in detail in the leadership and management section of the report. Very effective use is also made of teaching assistants, especially in Years 10 and 11. When there are disruptions to staffing, as occurred during the inspection week when there was staff absence affecting personal, social and health education (PSHE), arrangements for cover are very effective. These include the use of study managers who know students well supporting in lessons, thereby ensuring continuity in learning. The use made of learning resources, including those for ICT, is excellent.
30. The teaching of students with special or additional educational needs is very effective. Work in subject lessons is mostly well matched to the students' needs and abilities, with support provided for individuals or groups when necessary. Teaching assistants are fully aware of the students' needs and interests and work closely with subject teachers, making a significant contribution in enhancing students' confidence and progress. Assessment and monitoring procedures are very thorough and allow students experiencing difficulties to be quickly identified. Students' individual education plans (IEPs) are available to subject teachers and assistants, but they are not helpful in lesson planning because they are insufficiently detailed and the targets for improvement are too general.
31. Assessment is good overall, but there is significant variation between subject areas. In science and ICT, assessment is excellent, and is highly instrumental in raising achievement. In English and citizenship, assessment is satisfactory, and in modern foreign languages, it is unsatisfactory. There is very good practice in using the outcomes of assessment with students to raise achievement through the system of progress review. This is extremely powerful, especially in Years 10 and 11.

Sixth form

32. The quality of teaching and learning in the sixth form is very good. Over half the teaching observed was very good or excellent, and nearly 90 per cent was at least good. Five examples of excellent teaching were seen: in performing arts, science, design and technology, ICT and geography. Excellent teaching was extremely well prepared, and was relentless in challenge and pace. Teachers treated students as independent learners, and enabled them to discover for themselves,
33. In the subjects inspected in detail, teaching was at least good, except in English, where it was satisfactory. In science, ICT and leisure and recreation, teaching was very good. Sampling across the whole curriculum, including major areas not inspected in detail, such as health and social care and performing arts, showed a picture of very good teaching and learning. The sample included an e-learning course in law, and another e-learning course in sociology was inspected in detail. As well as the excellent teaching referred to above in design and technology, geography and performing arts, very good teaching was also seen in performing arts, law, psychology, and health and

social care. In PE, good teaching and learning were seen, and in art teaching in the one lesson observed was satisfactory.

34. Assessment is good post-16, but the use of progress review is not as rigorous as it is in the main school. The new director of sixth form has rightly identified this as an area for improvement. Because students come from low starting points, and have significant strides to make to be successful on A level or AVCE courses, they need regular guidance and support through a formal review system to supplement the feedback which they get from subject teachers. At present, sixth form achievement is good; more rigorous progress review should raise standards further, as it has already done in Years 10 and 11.

The curriculum

The curriculum is of very good quality. There is an excellent programme of extra-curricular and enrichment activities. Accommodation and resources are very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good curriculum provision, supported by the effective use of cross-curricular ICT and innovative approaches to learning, enables students to achieve highly.
- The range of provision is very broad, especially in Years 10 to 13, to meet the wide range of learning needs and prepare students well for further study, training or employment.
- All students, including those who have special or additional educational needs, those who have English as an additional language or who are gifted and talented, have equal access to a wide range of learning opportunities during and beyond the school day.
- The school's resources – staff, learning resources and accommodation – are carefully deployed to help students to be successful learners.

Commentary

35. The curriculum policy, and the provision made for students in Years 7 to 13, reflects the school's aims, values and specialist status. In accordance with this, in addition to providing a very good quality inclusive curriculum that meets statutory requirements, cross-curricular ICT is integral to the students' learning.
36. Students who enter the school in Year 7 respond very well to specialist teaching and to the high expectations teachers have of them. Throughout Years 7 to 9, students experience all the subjects of the National Curriculum and RE. Students' learning also includes drama, a course in PSHE, a "Learning to Learn" programme and cross-curricular themes, including citizenship. All students also experience membership of different groupings for learning in a range of subjects and courses – this includes the effective use of setting. These arrangements ensure that the wide range of additional and educational needs present in each year group is met.
37. In addition to the core subjects of English, mathematics and science, students in Years 10 and 11 have a range of learning routes and courses that include full and short course GCSE's (with either single or double award), intermediate level GNVQ, opportunities for a college-based course, supported self-study or, for a small group, award-bearing work-related learning. The possible combination of courses to be followed depends on guidance about their appropriateness in relation to students' aptitude and aspirations. All students also study PSHE that includes careers and have tutor time to review the progress they are making. This approach enables students to

follow courses in which they will be successful but will also provide a route into future learning.

38. An outstanding programme of enrichment and extra-curricular activities complements the wide range of timetabled learning opportunities accessible to all students in Years 7 to 11. The take-up of these opportunities is high, especially in sport and the arts. Subject areas offer additional supported learning time that enables students to catch up or extend their work, sort out concerns or just benefit from access to resources, advice and guidance. The strategy also supports students in their own learning projects, as well as extending their interest in a particular topic or theme.
39. The very few students who have English as an additional language achieve very well because of very good monitoring and support. They are very well integrated socially and take part in the normal curriculum as soon as possible. There is also a clear rationale for the good provision to support gifted and talented students, both within and beyond the curriculum.
40. Students who have special or additional educational needs have good provision. Extra help is provided for individuals or groups who have poor literacy, numeracy, organisational, or social skills. The arrangements for own learning (homework which aims to make extended demands on students) are proving difficult for some of these students, particularly those with poor literacy or organisational skills. They receive help, but support is not always readily available for those students who find the new system daunting.
41. Overall, accommodation and resources are very good. The accommodation is very good, with an extensive and ongoing building programme that has transformed the learning environment for students in many curriculum areas. New facilities have also included a jointly funded dedicated cinema for up to 60 people. ICT accommodation has been refurbished and is used to support students' learning across the curriculum. The new, well-equipped open learning centre is very well used by students and provides a calm and inviting environment for study, both in and out of lesson time.
42. Across the school resources are very well deployed to support learning. There is a very good match between teachers and the current curriculum. The range of support staff to support students with special or additional educational needs is excellent.
43. Excellent access to computers and interactive whiteboards, both for discrete ICT lessons and to support learning within subjects, ensures that modern technology is at the heart of the school's ethos and permeates learning at every level. There are a few minor weaknesses in other resources that are highlighted in departmental planning.

Sixth form

44. Every opportunity is taken to ensure that the range of learning needs of post-16 students is met through the curriculum on offer. The provision includes a range of both GCE AS and A2 courses as well as those leading to GNVQ certification or the AVCE qualification. Currently, there are 16 GCE AS and A2 courses, including four (sociology, law, psychology, electronics) that are provided by distance learning, as well as ten vocational courses (three at GNVQ intermediate level and seven at AVCE single or double award level). There are also four vocational and industry validated courses, mainly in ICT.

45. The quality of this curriculum is very good. However, the strategic planning indicates that future cohorts of students will need a wider range of vocational courses than is already on offer. Costing is under way and future planning is being considered.
46. The basis of provision for students in Years 10 and 11 enables very good progression and continuity in learning into the sixth form to be achieved. For those students who join the sixth form from outside, good induction and sampling of courses enables a smooth transfer into post-16 learning.

Care, guidance and support

Provision for students' care, welfare, health and safety is very good. Students receive very good support, advice and guidance. There are very good opportunities for them to express their views and contribute to the running of the school.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Relationships between staff and students are excellent.
- Very good tracking of academic progress results in very effective support and guidance for students.
- There are very good procedures for child protection and health and safety.
- Very good induction arrangements smooth the transition to secondary education.
- Students' views are sought regularly and acted upon by the school.
- Healthy eating is well established.
- The school currently lacks an external careers adviser.

Commentary

47. Outstanding relationships underpin the life of the school, and in particular, the provision of support and guidance to students. Tutors take much interest in their students and are keen to support them, both academically and personally. Each term in Years 10 and 11, there is an academic review day, when tutors meet with students and their parents to discuss progress towards targets and to establish new targets. These days also include discussion of personal development, and are a very effective way of helping students to improve their achievement. Key Stage directors and co-ordinators follow closely the progress of students and monitor the work of tutors. Comprehensive data on students' progress is efficiently recorded and extremely accessible to tutors and senior managers. Students appreciate the high quality of academic support they receive. The tutorial programme includes a number of taught sessions in addition to the time spent with the form tutor. Some of these sessions are of necessity being used for additional careers guidance, as the school's response to the lack of external careers advice. The work covered in these sessions gives students good general guidance, but cannot fully replace the advice to individuals provided by a dedicated adviser.
48. Transitional and annual reviews of statements of special educational need fully meet statutory requirements and are attended by the students and a high proportion of their parents. Students who have special educational needs receive appropriate support and additional teaching, and support staff provide very effective help and guidance in both subject lessons and within the special or additional educational needs base. There has been insufficient training for staff on identifying and assessing individual

needs. The department is very ably supported by a number of professionals from outside the school who give good quality advice to staff, students and parents.

49. Health and safety is ensured by a very efficient system for making risk assessments and by the carrying out of regular safety inspections in the school. The child protection officer has been well trained, knows the local procedures and agencies, and is highly committed to keeping staff well informed on signs of abuse and how to react to the disclosure of abuse.
50. Students comment on how well they were introduced to the school. The school gathers good information to ensure that students are individually known on arrival. Before students who have special educational needs transfer to the school, helpful dialogue with partner primary schools allows students' special educational needs to be known and understood. There are very good familiarisation arrangements and many students will have attended assemblies, sports days, science lessons or other events at the school before they come. There is also a numeracy and literacy summer school for those about to enter the school.
51. Students' views are sought through an annual questionnaire. These are well designed to reveal any concerns which need to be addressed. These surveys are analysed comprehensively and the results fed back to students through year assemblies, the school council and other means. Students are informed of what action is to be taken on the issues that are raised. The school council provides an additional forum in which students may make a high-level contribution to the running of the school. It has an important role in co-ordinating and leading charitable work within the school. Currently, a subcommittee is devising a new summer uniform. The council has decided on the seating arrangements in the new canteen and has worked closely with the catering manager on healthy eating issues. Carbonated drinks and processed foods high in fat and sugar content are not available. The catering manager purchases high quality foodstuffs and devises healthy options, such as a range of sugar-free cold drinks.

Sixth form

52. The provision made to support and advise students is good. The detailed marking of work by subject and course teachers provides students with appropriate evaluative feedback and indications of what to do to further improve their assignments. There are also good systems for tracking and monitoring each student's attainment and progress that enable targets for overall improvement to be set. However, the review process lacks the robustness of that in the main school, and account needs to be taken not only of students' academic performance but also of their attitudes, conduct, attendance and personal development. The improvement of this aspect of the school's work is a priority in the current improvement plan and is already receiving attention.
53. Students have access to a range of literature and advice from careers teachers. However, currently, the school does not have an external careers adviser – a matter that concerns many students who want specialist advice and guidance. Some have shown great initiative in using a number of Internet websites to glean information about further and higher education course options appropriate to achieving their aspirations, but the absence of an external careers adviser is a significant lack in the provision being made for students.
54. The school regularly canvasses students' views: the responses are analysed and action taken. The director of sixth form is consulting students about the re-modelling of the common room and the nature of ICT and other facilities.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

There are very good links with parents and with schools and colleges. There are excellent links with the community, local, national and international.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Parents are provided with very good quality information.
- Parents give the school very good support.
- There is an extremely wide range of links with the community, both locally and internationally.
- There are very good links with partner schools, colleges and universities.
- Parents' views are sought, listened to and acted upon.

Commentary

55. The school's newsletters, annual report from governors, prospectus and reports on students' progress are all of high quality. The full annual reports, which are very informative, are succinct, reflect successes, identify areas for improvement and give precise targets. There are very good opportunities for parents to support students' learning. Parents are invited to discuss reports, individual education plans and student support plans, where these are provided. There is an annual progress evening when parents can meet all the teachers of their sons and daughters, and in Years 10 and 11, there are termly academic review interviews, which a high proportion of parents attend. There are joint plans to tackle poor attendance or behaviour. Parents monitor own learning (homework) and most regularly read record books. All of this adds up to the very effective involvement of parents. They are keen supporters of sports fixtures,

participate in school trips, attend the many events put on by the school and some help raise funds by participating in events held by the Friends of Sandwich School.

56. Communication between parents and school has been improved by the appointment of Key Stage officers. They are always available throughout the school day and can speedily find answers to parents' queries. The families liaison officer is the focus for family support and seeks information from parents for unexplained absences, thus helping parents to keep track of students. A high percentage of the parents of students with special educational needs attend annual reviews and are present on parents' evenings when individual education plans for their child are discussed. Measures for developing even closer liaison with parents, particularly those who are reluctant to visit the school, are currently under discussion.
57. Every year, the school conducts a parental questionnaire and reports the results in newsletters. The school's response to criticisms and a summary of action to be taken are provided at the same time. These are very good procedures to ensure that concerns are treated effectively.
58. Links with the community are excellent. There is a very impressive range of well developed and very well managed links with the local, national and wider international communities. These links provide outstanding enrichment opportunities for students to experience the world of work, business, leisure, sport, education, charity work and vocational pursuits. The school provides an excellent centre for the provision of adult education and a range of sporting and community activities for local people. It has forged very good partnerships with a number of organisations that support and extend the educational work and activities of the school. The governing body has co-optees from local business who support the school's specialist status and students from the school regularly participate in, and promote, local community events.

EXAMPLE OF OUTSTANDING PRACTICE

The school offers an excellent range of international experiences, which have a direct impact on raising standards and achievement, promote a multicultural dimension to the curriculum and provide professional development for staff.

Over recent years, the school has forged close links with a number of educational and other institutions throughout the world. This has resulted in the addition of an international dimension to the curriculum. Students have performed in joint music and drama productions with link schools from Singapore and Australia. This has raised their multicultural awareness, as well as their aspirations in terms of standards of performance. Students have engaged in charity work which resulted in founding a farm in Namibia, and studied aspects of science and design and technology in Paris. Those taking GCSE history and geography have been on field trips to the battlefields in northern France and the Normandy beaches. Students of English literature have had opportunities to visit Northern Ireland to gain first-hand experience of the context of one of their set books. Students of French have taken part in a home-to-home French exchange with their link school, in addition to a number of trips to France. As part of their professional and personal development, teachers and other staff are encouraged to 'scour the world for the best educational practice' and numerous teachers and administrative staff have taken part in study visits to link schools all over the world. These have resulted in curriculum development in areas such as vocational education and teaching methodology.

Sixth form

59. The extensive community links, local, national and international, have a very beneficial impact on students' life and learning. Sixth form students are involved in a community arts projects with local primary schools and benefit from a close relationship with the

local Rotarians through their own Interact club. Strong links with commerce and business, with international companies and providers of both further and higher education, as well as links through work experience, all enhance students' understanding of the world and life beyond school.

60. Post-16 links with local schools and colleges are strong, but progress in shaping and formalising an effective learning partnership to benefit all students in this area is slow. Many of these local, national and international links have been forged by the school as part of its vision for broadening understanding, raising expectations and preparing students for life as citizens of the world.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The leadership of the headteacher is outstanding. The work of the governing body is excellent. Key staff give very good leadership and the effectiveness of management is excellent.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The headteacher's shared vision and values pervade and influence every aspect of the school's work.
- Very effective monitoring leading to well-targeted intervention and support keep standards high.
- School self-evaluation is outstanding: there is a culture of continuous self-review.
- Strategic planning is coherent and makes excellent use of all opportunities to drive improvement forward.
- Excellent arrangements for induction, performance management and professional development sustain high quality practice.
- The exceptional partnership between the headteacher and deputy headteacher ensures that the vision is translated into reality.
- Governors are extremely knowledgeable about the school, and challenge senior managers to improve performance in all areas.
- The school's climate allows innovation and risk taking, and develops all within the school community.

Commentary

61. The vision that "learning is at the heart of what we do" is communicated frequently, and lived out in the daily life and work of the school. The ethos is excellent, highly inclusive, and based on the principle of achievement for all. Staff morale is high, and there is a sense of purpose, excitement and enjoyment shown by both staff and students. There is a justifiable pride in the school community.
62. The headteacher gives outstanding leadership. He is unswerving in pursuing a relentless drive for improvement, and in providing the opportunities for both staff and students to realise their own potential. He works within a large but cohesive leadership team, all of whom have clear and significant responsibilities which they undertake with confidence and initiative. The philosophy of "distributive leadership" is very successful, and ensures that leaders and managers are developed in their roles, in accordance with the headteacher's philosophy of developing capacity for improvement.
63. There is an exceptional partnership between the headteacher and deputy headteacher, who has responsibility for quality assurance, which ensures that the vision is consistently translated into a classroom reality. The monitoring of performance, particularly that of departments, is highly effective. The relatively weaker areas in modern foreign languages and English were well known to senior management before the inspection, and close support and intervention were already in place and having some effect. An outstanding feature of monitoring is the progress review system, which both helps to keep students on track and assists in the evaluation of the work of departments. As a result of highly analytical and frequent review, and well-targeted intervention, the effectiveness of management in bringing about and sustaining change is excellent.

EXAMPLE OF OUTSTANDING PRACTICE

A progress review system developed in the school both raises students' achievement and informs evaluation of departmental performance.

The system of tracking students' progress has been developed in the school over a number of years. It incorporates data from a wide range of sources, which is used to set students' targets and then monitor regularly progress against those targets. The information is easily accessible to all teaching staff through the school's intranet, and colour is used to highlight potential underachievement, as well as students who are exceeding targets. The system provides a means of looking at the performance of individual sets or groups, and this is used by senior managers to identify where support may be needed. There is also a measure of value added based on the aggregation of individual student performance against targets, which again is used by senior management to identify departments which may need intervention. The strengths of the system are its ease of use and accessibility, the use of colour to aid interpretation, and the fact that the same information is used both with students, and as a means of departmental monitoring. This makes it highly efficient.

64. Self-evaluation is outstanding. The school improvement plan is a true working document. The strategy is coherent, uses other initiatives such as the leadership improvement grant to full effect, and is reviewed termly for the effectiveness of its implementation. Although formal review is termly, in reality, there is continuous review, as there is a firmly embedded culture of self-review and evaluation at all levels within the school. Innovative thinking is encouraged; the most outstanding example of the success of this is the use which has been made of ICT to transform students as learners. The school was also re-modelling the workforce three years in advance of any national initiative. Leaders and managers are imaginative and skilful at overcoming barriers to improvement.
65. Performance management and line management are very well organised and highly effective. They have a big impact on raising standards. Procedures for performance management lead to the clear identification of departmental and personal needs. Both performance management and line management pinpoint strengths and weaknesses, so that effective support can be provided to departments and individuals when required.
66. The induction of staff is excellent. All new staff have opportunities to visit the school prior to taking up their appointment and newly qualified staff can work in the school at the end of the summer term. There is a very comprehensive, user-friendly induction booklet and very good support on the school intranet for all new staff. The induction programme for newly qualified teachers, graduate trainees and other new staff is very comprehensive and flexible to cater for developing needs. The support from senior managers and departments for new staff is excellent.
67. The continuing professional development of staff is excellent. Whole-school, departmental and personal training needs are very well catered for. Last year, there were over a hundred different training opportunities for staff. The main foci of professional development were ICT and the training of middle managers. Continuing professional development plays a very important role in raising standards and achievement, and includes international visits which enrich professional debate.

68. Governors are extremely well informed, and highly influential in shaping change. They challenge the headteacher and senior managers to improve performance in all areas, taking their thinking through to the performance targets which they set for the headteacher. They are highly committed to their role, and have recently started to undertake two visits per term to their linked curriculum areas. Governors have been closely involved in recent improvements to financial management.

Financial information

Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004

| Income and expenditure (£) | | Balances (£) | |
|----------------------------|-----------|--|---------|
| Total income | 4,652,555 | Balance from previous year | 49,655 |
| Total expenditure | 4,767,655 | Balance carried forward to the next year | -65,445 |
| Expenditure per pupil | 4,199 | | |

69. Following recent improvements, financial management is good. There was an overspend at the end of last year, and as a result, financial procedures have been tightened. Expenditure is now much better monitored. The predicted out turn for the current financial year is a very modest surplus, which is likely to be achieved. The school is very successful in funding developments such as the major improvements to accommodation. Much of this funding, including that for the new cinema, is a result of partnership and community ventures. There has been a high level of investment in ICT, with one computer per student. This has been an extremely successful use of resources. Very good use has been made of additional funding resulting from specialist status. Value for money is very good.
70. The sixth form runs within its budget, and is made cost-effective in a number of ways: the number of students on courses is reviewed, and not all courses run, within an overall curriculum strategy which provides a suitable range and breadth. Other strategies, such as the use of e-learning and efficient timetabling arrangements, also ensure that costs are controlled. There is a good balance between keeping within budget and providing for needs in an area where improving sixth form retention is a priority.

Sixth form

71. There is a clear and unequivocal role for the sixth form, which is to prepare post-16 students for life in a global environment. The governing body is highly committed to the sixth form and to the strategic planning that will provide education for post-16 students of the highest quality. The headteacher, leadership team and director of sixth form have developed a framework enabling students to benefit from a very wide range of learning opportunities. Together, this group of senior staff provide very effective leadership of this aspect of the school's work.
72. The director and his team of tutors work closely together to monitor the effectiveness of students as learners and provide support for their personal development. Subject

and course teachers also help students to meet their assignment deadlines and benefit from the extensive opportunities for enrichment.

73. Course and subject leadership is very effective. In subjects inspected in detail, leadership and management were excellent in ICT; very good in science and leisure and recreation; good in sociology, music and business education; but unsatisfactory in English.
74. The sixth form has secure systems in place to monitor, for example, the size and viability of teaching groups; the level of curriculum support students need in the four distance learning courses; as well as the monitoring of courses where there is some joint provision for Year 12 and 13. This ensures that the best possible use is made of resources to secure very good quality and cost effective learning experiences for post-16 students.
75. High quality strategic planning and self-evaluation ensure that priorities for improvement are clearly defined and will provide direct benefit for students. Adjusting the balance of the curriculum to provide more vocational courses is under consideration, as is the process to provide more robust student progress reviews.

Statutory requirements

76. Although a daily act of collective worship is not provided for all students, there is a programme of frequent assemblies for different year groups. These are of very good quality, and strongly support students' spiritual development, which is good. The headteacher and governing body should continue their efforts to meet statutory requirements in full.

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 AND 4

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

English

Provision in English is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- ICT is used well to support students' learning.
- Close attention to the development of literacy leads to strong progress and high achievement over Years 7 to 9.
- Students achieve very well in GCSE literature examinations but are well below the school's expectations in language, particularly in the case of boys.
- In some lessons too little is expected of students with the result that they underachieve.
- Marking and target setting are uneven in quality and usefulness.
- Uncertainties of staffing have had a negative impact on students' experience of English and consequently their attainment at GCSE.
- The curriculum leaders for Key Stages 3 and 4 are beginning to have a beneficial impact on standards of teaching and learning.

Commentary

77. Students' attainment when they enter the school is well below average. Standards in tests at the end of Year 9 taken in 2004 were in line with the national average and outstanding compared to those in similar schools. The proportion of students gaining A* to C grades in GCSE examinations in 2004 was well below the national average for language (though in line with standards in similar schools) but above average for literature (and outstanding compared to the results in similar schools). The pattern of attainment is therefore rather variable. Considering standards on entry, students make good overall progress during their time in the school, with exceptional achievement by the end of Year 9. In 2004, a substantial number of students (particularly boys) did not meet the school's target grades for GCSE language. Achievement, like attainment, is variable, therefore, but is still good overall in comparison to that in other secondary modern schools. This variability is related to staffing uncertainties, which are still impeding progress to some extent, despite new appointments.
78. The inspection confirmed this uneven but substantially positive picture. Lessons seen in Years 7 to 9 indicated satisfactory standards of teaching and learning overall, with a range from unsatisfactory to good. In Years 10 and 11 teaching and learning were very good overall. New members of staff, including the two team leaders, teach well. Expectations are high and teaching methods (including the innovative use of ICT) are energetic, varied and motivating. Students expect to work hard and enjoyably, and they respond well to opportunities to take responsibility and show what they know and can do. These qualities were evident in a lesson examining the social background to *An Inspector Calls* through images from the films of Mitchell and Kenyon, and in another which employed a variety of group activities to get an understanding of how

journalists gain and maintain readers' attention. These high expectations are not universally evident, however, and this contributes to the variability within the department. In two lessons, students made unsatisfactory progress because the work did not offer sufficient challenge. If students are required simply to be acquiescent, they will be, because they are well-behaved, but the quality of learning is consequently compromised. Similar disparities were evident in marking and assessment. At best, the department's procedures for feedback and target setting are adhered to fully and sensitively, so that students know what their current standard is and what they need to do to improve. In other cases, marking is perfunctory and targets too vague to be useful.

79. Leadership is currently good. The department has suffered in the recent past, however, from the illness and absence of key members of staff. There has been a resultant drift in establishing coherent and agreed working practices. This is now being energetically addressed by the teachers overseeing Key Stages 3 and 4. They offer different but equally impressive models of effective teaching and curriculum planning. Many of the developments that are in train (an emphasis on active learning in Years 7 to 9; the changed GCSE language syllabus to take better account of students' interests and aptitudes; and the confident use of ICT to promote and extend students' learning) have yet fully to bear fruit. Nevertheless, there has been an immediate positive impact on the achievement of students, particularly in Years 10 and 11. Management is satisfactory. There is, however, a legacy of missed opportunities for developing the work of the department which it will take time to put right.
80. Despite these difficulties, provision for the subject is good for the following reasons. Achievement, despite some variations, is good. Much of the teaching seen during the inspection demonstrated that teachers have the skills to accelerate learning and make it exciting. The use of ICT for teaching and learning is imaginative and successful. The emphasis on the development of literacy is leading to very good progress over Years 7 to 9. There is a carefully fostered presumption across the school that students are capable, with the right encouragement, of high achievement, so that students come to English primed to work hard and do well. There is an extraordinarily rich programme of extra-curricular support for learning and personal development. These features, with the addition of targeted support from senior management, also explain why there has been good improvement since the last inspection.

Drama

81. Drama was sampled as part of the inspection. Students have experience of drama in Years 7 and 9 and the subject is a popular option choice for GCSE. In the sixth form, a successful AVCE course runs for Performing Arts. Results at GCSE are close to national standards, and indicate exceptional achievement, given students' prior attainment and their performance in other subjects. Standards in the sixth form are above national expectations. Standards of teaching and learning were very good in the two lessons observed in Years 9 and 10, and very good in the two sixth form lessons seen, with one of these being outstanding. Also outstanding is the commitment to extra-curricular provision: the drama and dance clubs, school performances of very high quality, and regular theatre visits. Not surprisingly, students appreciate the expertise of their teachers, and the strong support they give to their intellectual and personal development.

Media Studies

82. Media studies was sampled as part of the inspection. In the newly-introduced GCSE course, results in 2004 were in line with the national average and outstanding in comparison with those in other secondary modern schools. Similarly, at A-level, results were in line with national expectations, representing outstanding achievement, given students' prior attainment. Provision for the subject is, therefore, very good. Two lessons were observed in Years 11 and 13. Both showed students highly motivated by expert teaching and first-class facilities. The broad vision of the teacher responsible for Media goes well beyond the school curriculum. During the inspection, for example, pupils from local primary schools were involved in a brilliantly conducted film workshop of great benefit to them and to the contributing sixth form students. Media facilities in the school, including the recently opened cinema, are an acknowledged high quality resource for the wider community.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

83. Students come into Year 7 with standards of literacy which are well below average. Therefore, the development of language skills is a priority for the school. The exceptional provision in ICT is of great benefit to students in advancing their language and presentational skills, as is the battery of initiatives and procedures overseen by the literacy co-ordinator. The successful promotion of literacy was noted by inspectors in English, mathematics, science, ICT, geography, design and technology, and religious education. This insistent focus on providing students with a rich variety of opportunities to develop and practise speaking, listening, reading and writing (both within and beyond subject areas) results in substantial gains in competence and confidence. Because of this very good provision, standards of literacy are in line with national expectations by the end of Year 9 and remain so in Years 10 and 11. This is significant improvement since the last inspection.

Modern foreign languages

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- ICT is used well in many lessons to present and practise language effectively.
- Overall achievement is good, but some students underachieve because of low teacher expectations.
- High and low attaining students are well supported and achieve very well in some lessons.
- Students' work is not always marked regularly and the assessment of work is not consistent across the department.
- The take-up for languages in the current Year 10 is very low.
- The visits to France have a positive impact on motivation and standards.

Commentary

84. Results in teacher assessments in 2003 in modern foreign languages were well below what is expected nationally for all schools at the end of Year 9. They improved in 2004 to just below average. Compared to results for similar schools, the results in 2004 were above the national average. Standards observed in French and Spanish lessons and in students' written work in Year 9 are currently below average. Many students have a weak grammar and vocabulary base, and listening, speaking, reading and writing skills are generally below average. Pronunciation is good when students repeat after a model, but anglicised when they speak without support. Students do not have sufficient opportunities to use past and future tenses and write more complex sentences, containing reasons and opinions.
85. Results in GCSE French in 2003 were well below the national average for all schools. In 2004, results improved and were below the national average. When compared to the results of schools with similar prior attainment, and taking into account the very high entry, the results in 2004 were above average. Overall standards of work in French in lessons and in written work are below the national expectation in Year 11. Most high and some middle-attaining students, however, produce work of GCSE A* to C standard. These students understand spoken French well and they pronounce familiar language well. Many use present, future and past tenses and some more complex sentences in familiar contexts in their written work. The written and spoken French of many middle and low attaining students is weak, they have many gaps in basic structures and vocabulary, and their pronunciation is not always intelligible.
86. Students' achievement over time in relation to their ability in French and Spanish in Years 7 to 9 is good. Again, over time in relation to their ability, the school's own monitoring of progress indicates clearly that most students achieve well in French in Years 10 and 11. High attaining students and many low attaining students achieve very well as a result of good or very good teaching, and the impact of this teaching was seen in work scrutinised during the inspection. In two French lessons, low attaining students achieved very well, and in two other French lessons, students' achievement was unsatisfactory. This underachievement was related directly to the quality of the teaching, and this variation in achievement was also seen in work scrutinised. Overall, despite some high achievement, students achieve less well in modern foreign languages than in most of their other subjects.
87. Teaching and learning in French and Spanish are satisfactory from Year 7 to Year 11. Within this overall judgement, however, there were examples of both unsatisfactory and very good lessons. The very good lessons were well prepared and challenging, had a brisk pace and teachers had very high expectations and used the foreign language as the normal means of communication. Relationships were very good, students were enthusiastic and keen to ask questions and volunteer answers, and they worked very well in pairs. ICT was used very effectively to present new language and to consolidate and extend learning. In the unsatisfactory lessons, the pace was slow, and the work was pitched at too low a level and too much English was used. Students sometimes arrived late to lessons without pens, were poorly motivated and slow to start work. They did not stay on task and were easily distracted. Not all teachers mark students' work regularly. Some marking is very good, however, and teachers assess work accurately with either National Curriculum levels or GCSE grades and provide very good advice on how students can improve.

88. The French assistant is well deployed and has a positive impact on learning in small withdrawal groups. The department's trips abroad and the exchange link with France motivate students and help to raise standards.
89. The overall leadership of the department is satisfactory, but the management is unsatisfactory. The departmental line manager, the head of department, and other key staff within the department have accurately identified the areas for development and strategies to raise standards. Many of these targets have not yet been met, although there has been some improvement in standards. Key areas, including the assessment of students' work, the quality of teaching and learning, and the use of the foreign language, are not yet consistent in quality. Improvement since the last inspection is overall unsatisfactory, although recent signs of improvement mean that the current rate of progress, with support from senior management, is satisfactory. In particular, the proportion of students achieving in line with the school's predictions is increasing steadily.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Achievement is very good.
- The progress made by students from their entry into the school to the end of Year 9 is impressive.
- Teaching is good, and often very good, with lesson planning of high quality.
- ICT is extensively used in teaching but there is inconsistent use by students of ICT within the subject.
- Student progress records are detailed and are very well used in monitoring performance.

Commentary

90. Students enter the school with below average standards in mathematics, many well below average. In national tests at the end of Year 9, whilst results fluctuate from year to year, there is an overall upward trend. In 2004, the standards reached were close to national averages, and were well above those for similar schools. The performance of boys tends to be slightly better than that of girls. At GCSE, all students who enter the examination gain at least a basic grade, well above national averages. Results for grades A* to C are below national averages but above those for similar schools. Most pupils gain grades in the B to E range, and boys again perform better than girls. Both boys and girls achieve better results in mathematics than in their other subjects.
91. Comparing performance with standards on entry into the school, the achievement of students is very good by the end of Year 11. It is particularly impressive in Years 7 to 9, with many students improving by two National Curriculum levels. In work seen, the considerable emphasis placed upon improving skills in basic arithmetic, and in teaching students how to set out details of method in a logical manner, contributes significantly to subsequent success.
92. Teaching and learning are good, with many very good lessons seen also. The planning of lessons is of high quality. Considerable and very effective use is made of

data projectors and interactive whiteboards. Younger students especially are fascinated at how, with this powerful teaching medium, graphs may rapidly be shown and the ease with which shapes may be transformed by reflections, rotations or enlargements. Lesson starters are often crisp and challenging, and frequently develop into the main activity of the lesson. This ability of the teachers to engage the attention of the students enables rapid progress. In question and answer sessions, students are usually asked to explain fully their reasoning, a process that significantly boosts understanding and learning. Other students are attentive when one of their number is answering, knowing that they too will be given equal opportunity. Teacher-student relationships are very good, and students feel confident to ask if they have not fully comprehended. Help is also provided beyond normal lesson times. Follow-up work (own learning) is set in many lessons, promoting greater independence of thinking, building upon lesson content or providing further challenges to the students.

93. Most students are attentive, well-disciplined and motivated. They settle quickly to work and know that they are receiving good tuition. Where there are elements of potentially distracting or disruptive behaviour, these are quickly dealt with. Exercise books are well marked, often with constructive comment, though this is not consistent across the department. Whilst innovative technology is well used by teachers, there is, as yet, limited use of ICT by the students themselves within mathematics lessons. All Year 7 pupils do have a period per week with the Successmaker software, strengthening their basic mathematics and remedying weaknesses. This, together with the strong support of teaching assistants in a range of lessons, particularly enables those students with additional educational needs to make good progress. Some classes in Years 10 and 11 access Headstart, a package that assists GCSE improvement. A newly introduced practical-based GCSE statistics course is being followed by students of a wide range of mathematical ability, and the theory element is proving very challenging for the lower-attainers.
94. Leadership and management are very good. The new subject leader has inherited a strong team, responsibilities are shared and there is effective contact with senior management. Improvement since the last inspection is good. Students' records are of high quality, with extensive data on results, targets and progression towards them. Colour coding highlights students who are exceeding targets and deserve praise and further challenge, and those who are falling short of targets and need support or intervention. The monitoring of progress is a regular occurrence. Some higher-attaining students, and the gifted and talented, enter mathematical challenges and chess competitions. There are good links with junior schools, booster classes, revision programmes and a summer school. Departmental self-evaluation is very good, both recognising the strengths and aware of areas for improvement. This constant ongoing analysis is invigorating, indicative of a forward-looking department, and the consequential benefits to the students are considerable.

Mathematics across the curriculum

95. Regular attention within mathematics lessons to the application of number, including mental skills and the use of calculators, promotes good improvement in the students' standards of arithmetic. Most students have a sound understanding of decimals, percentages and basic probability, with higher-attainers proceeding to ratio, Pythagoras and algebraic manipulation. Through calculation, measurement, drawing or graphing, the expectation of work of good quality enables all successfully to access other areas of the curriculum. The use of measurement and weighing are sound in

design and technology. The use of scale model prototypes in textiles, calculations of speed and of current and resistance in science, the determination of heart rates in physical education, and the use of Venn diagrams in geography are all appropriately undertaken. Graphical display, through bar and pie charts, tabulation and tallying, is widely and effectively used in other subjects. This is often extended with ICT applications and the use of spreadsheets. Numeracy is at least satisfactory in all subjects, but opportunities are missed for developing it beyond very basic applications in, for instance, modern foreign languages, history and physical education. Overall provision is good. A basic numeracy pack is issued to teaching assistants and heads of departments, but could be usefully be made more comprehensive.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Results in tests and examinations are well above average when compared with students' prior attainment.
- The use of ICT to improve learning and achievement is excellent.
- Records of marks and their use to support students are excellent.
- Teaching is very good because it is demanding and very well planned.
- Students work hard and behave very well because of teachers' constant encouragement.
- Provision for the gifted and talented needs to be improved.

Commentary

96. Results in the Year 9 tests in 2003 were below the national average. However, when compared with the students' earlier results, their achievement was above average, with the proportion gaining Level 5 or better being well above average. Results overall improved in 2004 although the number achieving Level 6 declined. GCSE and GNVQ results in 2003 were about average compared with national figures and well above average when considered in relation to the students' prior attainment. In 2004, both GCSE and GNVQ results improved from those achieved in 2003. Students' achievements in examinations are very good although boys did not do as well as girls in 2004.
97. Standards are about average by the end of Year 9 and above average by the end of Year 11, with some students achieving more highly. Practical and investigative skills improve and are above average by Year 11; they are particularly good in GNVQ courses. Literacy skills are above average and numeracy skills about average.
98. Achievement in lessons in all years is very good. Boys and girls and students with special educational needs do equally well. This is due to well-planned, demanding teaching that frequently makes very good use of ICT to interest and motivate students so that they work hard. A large majority of lessons proceed at a very good pace
99. Teaching and learning are very good in all years; in a good number of lessons, they are excellent and the use of ICT is innovative. Teachers provide clear instructions so that students understand what to do and can begin their work quickly. Relationships are very good; students are regularly encouraged, and they carry out research and

practical tasks confidently and responsibly. They are well motivated and ask perceptive questions. Very demanding work, for example, about cloning, is very well organised. On rare occasions, too much of the work is led by the teacher and the learning, although still satisfactory, slows in pace. Teaching assistants support students with special educational needs very well.

100. Leadership and management are both very good, and in promoting the use of ICT in science, they are excellent. The high quality leadership is sustained by very good teamwork. Teaching plans are very good, and they provide many opportunities for students to work independently, including frequent use of ICT that raises standards. Records of marks are thorough and they are used very effectively to inform students about their progress and to identify and support those who are underachieving so that their work improves. New courses have been introduced and the variety of courses provided in Years 10 and 11 is used very carefully to ensure that the course followed by each student is the one best suited to their needs; as a result, standards are rising.
101. Improvement since the previous inspection has been very good. Standards have risen. Extensive use is made of ICT, and in Years 7 to 9, investigative skills are taught thoroughly. The achievement of lower attaining students is now very good because their work is well suited to their needs. Students whose work does not meet their targets are very well supported.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is outstanding achievement because students enter school with well below average skills in ICT and reach above average standards by Year 11.
- The teaching, which is always good or better, inspires students to do very well in lessons.
- Excellent leadership ensures the best use of teaching and learning resources.
- There is outstanding cross-curricular provision promoting independent learning.

Commentary

102. Standards are above the national average by the time students reach Year 11. In 2004, students gained above average grades in their GNVQ qualifications. This is an outstanding achievement for students who entered Year 7 with ICT skills that were well below average. Students are reaching standards in line with the national average by the end of Year 9 and there has been a steady increase in standards over the past three years. Girls and boys have similar achievement. Students with special educational needs are well catered for and make good progress in lessons. The standards of students' work observed in lessons confirm those reached in examinations. Students consistently work at or near their capacity and make comprehensive gains in their learning and achievement.
103. Teaching and learning are very good with many excellent features. Excellent teacher knowledge, combined with the extremely high expectations and challenge in lessons, has inspired students to enjoy ICT; students want to learn and want to do well. In the best lessons, exceptional use of computing and software resources leads to a culture

that builds an excellent capacity for students to work independently. The planning of lessons is very good. Well-designed worksheets enable students to make rapid progress. The marking of students' work is excellent. Students are fully aware of the progress they are making and how they can improve. All students, including those with special educational needs and those identified as gifted and talented, are taught very well, enabling them to reach their highest possible standards. A notable feature of all lessons is the encouragement by teachers to raise literacy levels, enabling students to access higher standards in their ICT projects.

104. Leadership is excellent. The head of department has great vision and strives to improve his department in every way possible. The school is at the forefront of innovation in terms of its use of ICT. Management is very good. Teachers are deployed very well and they receive excellent support from the head of department. Teaching and standards are monitored very well and very effective steps are taken to improve. There is an outstandingly strong team of teachers and technicians who have a common purpose to raise standards and enrich the ICT experience of students.
105. Resources are excellent with nearly one computer for every student in the school. There is an extensive range of software and it is used very effectively to broaden students' experience of ICT. Accommodation is very good. The seven dedicated ICT suites are bright, well decorated and have very good wall displays. Students' seating does not have the ability to be adjusted by height, but it is adequate. There are extensive opportunities for students to enrich their ICT skills with well-attended lunchtime and after-school sessions where students are invariably seen doing academic work.
106. Improvement since the last inspection has been excellent. All areas of the ICT provision have improved, especially the outstanding student achievement. Teachers' expectation and challenge, criticised in the last report as insufficiently high, are now excellent.

Information and communication technology (ICT) across the curriculum

107. The provision of ICT across the curriculum is outstanding. Students are using ICT very well in nearly all subjects to extend their learning and achievement. There is outstanding provision in science and design and technology, where innovation in the use of ICT is demolishing any barriers to learning. The effect of this cross-curricular provision on students' achievement is illustrated in the cameo of outstanding practice in the standards section of the report.

HUMANITIES

Geography

Provision in geography is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Consistently good quality teaching enables all students to learn and achieve highly.
- Students have very good attitudes to their work and behaviour.
- Very good use is made of ICT to support students' learning.
- Teachers have high expectations of their students.
- Leadership and management are good and provide a clear direction for the subject.

- Every effort is being made to further improve end of Year 11 standards.

Commentary

108. Many students enter Year 7 with standards in geography that are well below expectations. They respond well to specialist teaching and, from low starting points, make considerable progress and achieve highly so that, by the end of Year 9, standards in geography are in line with the national expectation. This was confirmed by work seen during the inspection. By the end of Year 11, the increasing number that follow the GCSE course gain results that have been below the national average but are above the average for secondary modern schools. In the work seen during scrutiny and in lessons observed, standards in Year 11 are about in line with expectations nationally. This represents very good achievement for these students from their level of attainment on entry. The major reason for this high achievement is the consistently good teaching which results in students making consistent and sustainable gains over time.
109. Students improve their standards of literacy and application of number so that by the end of Year 11 they are about average. However, they make significant progress and reach high standards in the application of ICT to support their learning.
110. Students have very good attitudes to their learning. They clearly understand the high expectations their teachers have of them. They recognise that learning is enjoyable but demanding; and that, if they work hard, there is no time to misbehave. The degree of responsibility they show when working on laptop or tablet computers is impressively high.
111. The overall quality of teaching and learning is very good. The planning of lessons is informed by very good subject knowledge and high expectations of the students. Other key characteristics of high quality teaching include: the involvement of all students in learning; the integral use of ICT and electronic whiteboards to support learning; the effective use of a range of interesting resources and imaginative tasks; and significant levels of challenge to encourage and develop critical thinking. Questions are very well used by both teachers and students to elicit information, clarify learning and extend understanding. The majority of lessons have a brisk pace and provide students at all levels with things to do and problems to solve that help them to extend their understanding and develop enquiry skills. In one lesson where the pace of learning slowed, the momentum for developing understanding and achieving highly was lost. Work is regularly marked and, often, detailed oral or written comments identify what needs to be done to improve standards. Students' progress is systematically tracked and monitored and targets are set to improve aspects of their work.
112. Leadership and management are good and provide a clear direction for the department's work. The planning of teaching and learning is supported by detailed schemes of work which are especially useful to non-specialist geographers. ICT is integral to all aspects of work in geography, including well-designed own learning (homework) projects, and use in lessons and extra-curricular programmes. Accommodation is excellent and a very good range of resources supports learning. Improvement since the last inspection has been good.

History

Provision in history is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve well as a result of their very positive attitudes and good teaching.
- Students' very good ICT skills have a significant impact on their learning.
- Developing assessment techniques are providing students with clearer guidance for improvement.
- Many students' source analysis and evaluation skills are underdeveloped.
- There is insufficient correction of errors in students' spelling.

Commentary

113. In 2004, teacher assessments indicated that the proportion of students reaching the expected level was below the national average. The proportion of students gaining grades A* to C in the 2004 GCSE examination was below the national average for all schools but was in line with that for similar schools.
114. In Year 9, standards are below expectations but achievement is good, as students enter the school with limited historical knowledge and low standards of literacy. The majority of students select and deploy information from sources well, although less critically than they might, as their source analysis and evaluation skills are relatively limited. Higher-attaining and average-attaining students complete some good quality extended writing in largely technically accurate English. Despite the efforts made to improve literacy, lower-attaining students still make frequent errors which are insufficiently corrected by teachers.
115. In Year 11, standards are rising, although for the current cohort (which was weak on entry) they are below expectations. Standards in Year 10 are higher than in Year 11, partly because Year 10 is a stronger cohort, but also because of improving teaching and learning. Students analyse sources much more regularly than they did in earlier years, although they still do not routinely comment on provenance in evaluating reliability. Students are confident to seek clarification and pose questions, and this allows them to make the best use of learning opportunities. In a lesson on the Hitler Youth, for example, students offered a variety of perceptive comments on the effectiveness of a selection of recruitment posters, which led to a worthwhile discussion. The limited organisational skills of some lower-attaining students restrict their achievement and independence in their learning, as the lack of order in their file notes makes effective revision very difficult. Overall, despite some variations, achievement is good. Students with special educational needs achieve well.
116. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Students make use of their very well developed ICT skills to research, communicate and further their learning. The majority of lessons are well planned, and employ a variety of methods and carefully chosen resources which engender a very positive response from students. Very good lessons are characterised by high expectations, pace and challenge. There is currently a significant element of non-specialist teaching in Years 7 to 9 which sometimes leads to missed opportunities to extend students' understanding and use of subject-specific terminology. Students are well known and supported by teachers. The department is implementing new assessment procedures which involve a much greater element of peer and self-assessment and better inform students about the scope for improvement.

117. The department is well led and managed. Close co-operation between the subject leader and the head of faculty has resulted in significant improvement since the last inspection, when many elements of provision were clearly unsatisfactory.

Religious education

Provision for religious education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching contributes to students' good learning and very good achievement.
- Very good leadership and management ensure standards in the subject are maintained.
- Students in Year 7 do not make the same progress in their attainment as those in Years 8 and 9.
- The time allocated to the teaching of the GCSE short course is below that recommended for examination courses.

Commentary

118. Students enter the school with below average attainment in relation to the expectations of the local agreed syllabus for religious education. As they move through Years 8 and 9, the good teaching and learning enable students to reach standards by the end of Year 9 that are in line with expectations. Most students, including those with special educational needs, make considerable gains in their knowledge and understanding of Christian, Muslim, Hindu and Buddhist beliefs and practices. Improvement in attainment is significantly better in Years 8 and 9 than in Year 7, where students are taught by non-specialists, and there is inconsistency in the depth of coverage of the topics. Overall, the standards attained at the end of Year 9 reflect very good achievement.

119. GCSE results in 2004, in the religious education short course, were well below the national average for grades A* to C, but all students entered achieved a pass grade between A and G. All students follow the GCSE short course and a small number have opted to be taught the full GCSE religious studies course in their own time. The time allocated to the GCSE short course is less than is nationally recommended, but the good teaching, which has high expectations, focused planning and good use of ICT, means that the level of attainment reached at Year 9 is maintained. Standards of work seen in Years 10 and 11 show attainment that is in line with national expectations by the end of Year 11. Students demonstrate satisfactory knowledge and understanding of moral issues in Christianity and Islam, and are increasing their skill in evaluating the significance of decisions made in the light of one's beliefs and values. The standards attained by the end of Year 11 represent very good achievement from students' starting points in Year 7.

120. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall and sometimes very good. Teaching is well planned and structured and, along with book resources, takes good account of the range of students' learning needs to be met. ICT is well used to promote the interest and motivation of students. Good student attitudes assist learning and achievement. A range of effective teaching methods, which are challenging, are

used with students of all abilities, although in Year 7, in the work seen, the level of challenge and expectation varies across teaching groups.

121. Leadership and management are very good. The head of department has a clear commitment and determination to raise standards. She has good subject expertise and a very good understanding of what needs to be addressed. Assessment procedures, including the use of target setting, are in place and contribute well to decisions on what students need to do to improve. There are limited opportunities for the use of visits and visitors to enhance learning but the subject makes a very good contribution to the students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Improvement since the last inspection is good.

TECHNOLOGY

Design and technology

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students have very good attitudes to learning and this is shown in their very good achievement.
- Excellent use of ICT and other technology enhances learning.
- The very good assessment and monitoring of students' work ensure accurate target setting.
- Leadership and management of the department are very good.

Commentary

123. Students enter the school in Year 7 with limited previous experience of the subject, but by the end of Year 9, teacher assessments show that they are working in line with national expectations. This was confirmed by work seen during the inspection, and represents very good achievement.
124. By the end of Year 11, GCSE examination results are overall above average compared to those from similar schools. However, there have been variations across the different material areas of the subject. Electronics and graphics results have been rising rapidly and achieving a proportion of A* to C grades above the national average for all schools, whilst results for food, textiles and resistant materials have been lower, because of difficulties with staffing. Overall achievement, taking account of what was seen in lessons, as well as the most recent GCSE results, is good, and is very high in some areas of work. Students with special educational needs achieve as well as other students with the good support of teachers and teaching assistants. Gifted and talented students are recognised, and targeted in lesson plans for extended tasks that enable them to achieve well.
125. Overall, teaching is very good across all areas of the department. Lessons are well planned and most have good pace with a variety of activities that keep students interested. Good questioning is used to really challenge students and to consolidate and extend their knowledge and understanding. Relationships are very good and students are keen to learn. The work of the lesson is reviewed effectively with students at the end of each session to find out what they have learnt. Teachers are

knowledgeable in their subject, and give individual tuition and support during lessons so that students are able to produce well designed products with a quality finish. Teachers enable students to work well in groups and independently by giving them confidence through encouragement and good skills teaching. Current teaching seen within food, resistant materials and textiles was of very good quality, and is likely to improve the results in these areas.

126. Teachers make excellent use of ICT and of the computer-aided design and manufacture facilities available in the department, to further students' awareness of the world of technology and to raise the standard of presentation of their work. There is an independent learning system where students learn the various aspects of technology, such as pneumatics and mechanisms, through assembling models and working through a series of questions on the computer. Students work at their own pace and are assessed by feedback from teachers and the electronic data. This work enhances significantly the learning in the classroom and adds to students' awareness of the world around them and the workplace.
127. The accommodation is spacious and the department is well resourced. Displays around the department are very good and examples of work show students what to aim for. Interesting and varied extra-curricular and cross-curricular activities and study sessions are offered to give students the widest possible experiences.
128. Leadership and management are very good. There is a clear determination to drive the department forward to further success and plans are in place to achieve this. An unsettled period of staffing has been resolved and teachers have been placed in their specialist areas to help raise the standard of GCSE results in food, textiles and resistant materials. Results in graphics and electronics are already very good. Technicians and teaching assistants are used effectively and are a valuable asset to the department. The department is not afraid of innovation and the new approach to the rotation in the different material areas for Years 7, 8 and 9 enables students to have a broader experience before making their final choice for GCSE. Assessment and monitoring are very thorough and all staff are kept informed of students' progress by means of end of rotation tests and departmental tracking sheets. Self-evaluation within the department is thorough and ongoing.
129. Improvement since the last inspection is good. All the issues mentioned in the last inspection report have been resolved. Teaching and learning have improved, with all the teaching now being good or better. New appointments in the faculty have improved the quality of the leadership and management and the new accommodation has enhanced the teaching areas.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

Art and design

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Achievement is good, as a result of good teaching.
- Enrichment opportunities are excellent and support learning extremely well.

- Students' basic and technical skills are not as well developed as other aspects of their work.
- There are too few opportunities for choice and independence within lessons to benefit the higher attaining students.

Commentary

130. Teacher assessments of standards at the end of Year 9 show standards to be broadly in line with those found nationally, and this was confirmed by work seen during the inspection. Good gains are made as students move up the school. All students achieve well, including those with special educational needs.
131. This good achievement is a result of good teaching which allows students to explore and experiment with colour, texture, composition and design. All students make good progress through the variety and range of learning opportunities open to them, both in and out of school. There are many opportunities to work with visiting artists and members of the local community. This enables students' confidence to grow and they are able to work with new materials and in new ways. They also share their ideas with others and take responsibility when presenting their work. Students' technical skills and basic skills are less well developed, however. There are few opportunities to improve or build on their basic drawing skills, such as line, tone and texture, and their observational sketches do not show a working knowledge of scale or composition. Similarly, although students have a satisfactory knowledge of the effects of colour, their knowledge of colour theory is insufficient to allow them to reach the higher levels of painting techniques. Higher attaining students, including the gifted and talented, are often involved in challenging project work but are given too few opportunities for independence and choice within some lessons and, as a result, different ways of learning are missed.
132. GCSE results in 2004 were above the national average and show an upward trend. The standard of work of GCSE students is above expectations. Again, students' achievement is enhanced as a result of working with prominent artists and through cultural activities and visits. Good progress is made through research opportunities which explore a variety of cultures and new materials and aid students in the development of their knowledge of colour, pattern and design. Although all students make good progress, there are too few opportunities for individuals to explore and analyse their own pathways to learning. As a result of this, students are not achieving at the highest levels of attainment.
133. The quality of teaching is good overall, and sometimes very good or excellent. Effective teaching offers a wide range and variety of experiences which make learning fun. Teachers' subject knowledge is good. This allows them to explain difficult concepts and ideas clearly and succinctly and, as a result, students learn quickly. Students receive excellent support and guidance from their school teachers and from their visiting teachers, who encourage them to work together and share their ideas and experiences. Students are willing participants who enjoy their art. Attitudes and behaviour are generally positive across all year groups. Within some teaching groups, however, students can become passive and do not always share their teachers' enthusiasm for the subject when insufficiently challenged. Similarly, high attaining students are not always given sufficient independence to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding in class.

134. The head of department provides good leadership and management. She is committed to raising standards by improving the quality of teaching and learning, and by providing stimulating enrichment opportunities for all students through an impressive community programme. Improvement since the last inspection is good.

Music

Provision in music is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Achievement is good.
- The teachers have very good subject knowledge and use it well to engage the students.
- Lessons are well planned with very good use of resources.
- The 11 to 14 curriculum is insufficiently organised to ensure the development of performance skills.
- There is a good focus on the music of other cultures.
- The GCSE results are well below average.
- Classes are well managed and the standards of behaviour are high.

Commentary

135. Overall standards of attainment are below average. The GCSE results for 2004 were well below average with students not doing as well in music as in their other subjects. The lack of instrumental experience in the group was a major factor contributing to these results. Standards of work seen in the current Year 11 are better and close to national expectations. There are improved standards in performance and composition as a result of recent developments made in the provision for instrumental lessons. Standards of attainment in Year 9 are below average, although standards in Years 7 and 8 are higher. The main weakness is in performance and composing as a result of an over-emphasis on listening and appraising in Year 7.
136. The level of achievement is good. In Years 7 to 9 students enter with well below average attainment and do well to attain below average standards by Year 9. Students with special educational needs make good progress and there are no significant differences in the performance of boys and girls. In Years 10 and 11, students continue to achieve well in attaining average standards.
137. The quality of teaching and learning is good in both Years 7 to 9 and in Years 10 and 11. Lessons are well planned with very good use of resources; for example, the school has borrowed a complete set of Indonesian Gamelan instruments to give the students first-hand experience of the music of another culture. ICT is well used in Years 10 and 11 where the group sizes are small but there is insufficient equipment for the larger classes in Years 7 to 9 to exploit the use of ICT. The teachers have very good subject knowledge and use it well to demonstrate and to illustrate their explanations. These are very clear but sometimes overlong, thereby reducing the time available for practical work. The teachers manage the classes well, insisting on high standards of behaviour. As a result, students concentrate well and work productively. Their relationships are very good and they collaborate well when sharing keyboards. There is a good level of individual teaching and teaching assistants are well used. As a result, students are well informed as to how well they are doing and

students with special educational needs make good progress. Overall, tasks are well matched to the students' needs and allow for performance at different levels. However, all students are usually given the same task and there is insufficient use of different tasks matched to the prior attainment of individual groups of students. The quality of the instrumental teaching is good.

138. The leadership of the department is good. The subject leader provides a good role model and, with the development of the instrumental work, has succeeded in creating an effective team. The department is well used by the students at breaks and after school and there is a good ethos. The management of the department is satisfactory. The instrumental work is well co-ordinated and data is well monitored. However, the curriculum in Years 7 to 9 is insufficiently organised so that all aspects of the National Curriculum get a balanced emphasis. As a result, students' performance skills are underdeveloped by Year 9.
139. The department makes a very strong contribution to the students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. This is done both through the use of well-chosen musical examples, reflecting students' own and other cultures, and the good range of extra-curricular activities, such as the school band and the annual music/drama production. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory. Teaching and learning standards have been maintained. GCSE courses have now been introduced and there is now good use of ICT in Years 10 and 11.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Physical Education

Provision in physical education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good teaching and learning lead to high levels of student achievement.
- The time allocated to the subject in Years 9, 10 and 11 is below the national recommendation, and has a negative effect on the standards reached.
- Students display very positive attitudes and consistently high standard of behaviour.
- There are very good accommodation and resources.
- No formal accreditation or record of achievement is available for Year 11 students not studying for GCSE.

Commentary

140. Students enter Year 7 with widely varied experiences of physical activities and games. Little information is received from partner primary schools, and so the department has no detailed knowledge of the students' attainment on entry. Many of the activities offered by the school are new experiences for the students and require a range of unfamiliar skills and techniques to be learned. Students benefit from being taught by knowledgeable and enthusiastic specialist subject teachers who have high expectations of their work and behaviour. In all years, students improve their level of skill and understanding in a wide range of different activities. Overall, their level of achievement is very good. Students enjoy the subject and participation rates are high.

141. In 2004, standards of attainment for Year 9 students were well above average. Standards for current Year 9 students are above average overall, with some attaining even better. The 2004 GCSE results for students in Year 11, although below the national average at A* to C grades, represents considerable improvement as students obtained or exceeded their target grades. Standards for those students who are not studying for GCSE are satisfactory overall, with a number of students having above average skills in some physical activities, particularly in team games such as basketball, netball, rugby and football. For these students, there is no formal accreditation or record of achievement that would provide a focus for, and recognition of, their efforts. The reduced lesson time in Years 9, 10 and 11 limits the opportunities for students to develop and refine their skills, strategies and techniques. The department has very good specialised indoor and outdoor facilities that enable a variety of activities to take place simultaneously. Students therefore have the opportunity to experience a very wide variety of physical activities and games, although such a rich curriculum again limits the time available for the development of any individual activity.
142. The quality of teaching observed ranged from satisfactory to excellent, and was very good overall. The teachers' extensive knowledge of each student and the very positive relationships encourage learning at all levels. Students concentrate well, co-operate with staff and each other, and work enthusiastically. They have very positive attitudes to the subject, and their very good behaviour allows lessons to proceed with little interruption. Activities are well planned so that students improve their performance by building logically on previously learned skills, techniques and strategies. On occasions, the students take responsibility for aspects of their own learning. They lead warm-up sessions, understanding the importance of preparing for exercise. In most lessons, students are encouraged to evaluate their own and others' performances, adapting their skills accordingly. Very good assessment procedures regularly monitor, track and record students' progress. Students are constantly reminded of what they need to do to improve. The teachers give freely of their time to organise, both at lunchtime and after school, a number of physical activities and games where students can further develop their interests and expertise. Many students find it difficult to attend after-school clubs because of the distance they have to travel home. The physical education staff run voluntary community projects and these give some students the opportunity to extend their skills and enjoy activities in a different setting.
143. A teacher who has been in the school for only one term is currently the acting head of department. She is providing good leadership and, working with the staff, has identified the areas for development, although these are yet to be fully included in the improvement plan. The management of the department is very good. Teachers and the head of department work very closely together in organising and managing the tasks necessary for the smooth running of the department. There is an excellent team spirit and a clear sense of common purpose. Good progress has been made since the last inspection, particularly in the quality of teaching and learning, and in the leadership and management of the department.

BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES

Provision in business studies is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Results for the full course, although still below the national average, improved significantly in 2004.
- Students achieve well as a result of teaching which is stimulating and engages students in their learning.
- The assessment and recording of students' work and progress are very thorough and feedback to students is always positive and informative.
- The head of department is an excellent role model and sets high expectations for students.
- Students have a positive attitude to their studies and work productively in and out of lessons.
- Students have very good ICT skills which support their achievement.

Commentary

144. Results on the short courses, now discontinued, have been disappointing, with very few of the students entered in 2004 gaining a pass grade. However, GCSE results for the full course improved significantly in 2004 when 42 per cent of students gained grades A* to C, compared to none the last time the full course was run. Although this is below the national average, it still represents good achievement in terms of students fulfilling their potential. Business studies attracts students of all abilities and this is accommodated by creating a positive working environment where all are valued for their contributions. Current students are achieving well and have gained a good understanding of a range of basic business terms. For example, Year 11 coursework demonstrates a good understanding of marketing concepts, break-even analysis and different types of business organisation.
145. Teaching and learning are good with some very good features. Lessons are very well prepared, are based on a thorough understanding of students' needs and make good use of ICT to meet them. Relationships with students are excellent and all are expected to, and do, work productively. For example, in a very good Year 10 lesson, the teacher's positive encouragement and engagement enabled students to explain with confidence different pricing strategies adopted by businesses when launching new products. Sometimes, work is not sufficiently differentiated to cater for all abilities and occasionally the teacher's input into lessons goes on for too long. Students' work is assessed thoroughly and contains positive feedback which enables students to improve, particularly with their coursework.
146. This is a department which has made great strides in its development and is still improving, not least as a result of the good leadership and management of the subject. The head of department sets high expectations for students in terms of performance, participation and behaviour in class, provides an excellent role model for staff and students and has created an environment for learning which values the contributions of all, regardless of ability. This is evidenced by the positive attitude students have towards the subject and their work, and the high levels of participation at the additional study class after school. There are plans to broaden the curriculum provision in Year 9. There is no dedicated business studies teaching room, the main room being shared with the ICT department. However, students have very good access to computers and use them well in class. They have developed a very good range of skills which enable them to produce coursework which is word processed and contains a variety of computer-generated charts and tables. There are a number of

business links which have been developed by the department but these are not extensive. GCSE business was not reported on in the last inspection.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

147. Personal, social and health education (PSHE) was sampled in Years 8 and 9. Two lessons were seen.
148. In Year 8, students showed interest in learning how to identify areas for improvement and set themselves smart targets. Some of them then applied what they had learned to their work; teaching and learning were good.
149. In Year 9, students were somewhat restless and talkative, but the teacher's good-humoured persistence meant that they grasped the main point of the lesson, which was to understand the changes in the status and role of women in the workplace. Teaching and learning were satisfactory.
150. The tutorial programme also includes taught sessions on "Learning to Learn". This is a well-structured programme. The one session sampled in Year 8 indicated that the earlier parts of the programme dealing with learning styles are successful and improve students' understanding of themselves as learners. Other material, developed originally within subject areas, is less successful and staff delivering the programme need more guidance on the use of these materials.

Citizenship

Provision in citizenship is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good opportunities are provided throughout the school for students to enhance their citizenship learning and skills.
- A range of good teaching materials support students' learning.
- The subject is not linked through the scheme of work to the school's very effective community activities.
- There is insufficient training and support for teachers who have little experience or expertise in teaching the subject.

Commentary

151. Standards at the end of Year 9 are in line with the expectations of the broad end of Key Stage descriptors. Students demonstrate knowledge and understanding of aspects of human rights, democracy, laws and rules, through studies within humanities and science. Many higher ability students attain above the expected levels in their skills of enquiry. Students of all levels of attainment, including those with special educational needs, are participating and taking responsible action in the many school-based community activities by the end of Year 9. Achievement is satisfactory.
152. At the end of Year 11, attainment remains in line with expectations. The raising of standards in Years 10 and 11 is affected by the way in which the subject is taught. It is taught in form tutor periods by form tutors, but frequently there is a shortage of time, some lack of specialist knowledge and a limited range of teaching methods used. In

these lessons, students are not always given a sufficient range of opportunities to fully express the breadth of their knowledge, understanding and skills. This affects achievement, which by the end of Year 11, in work seen, remains satisfactory.

153. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Good teaching materials are used to support learning in Years 10 and 11, but there is some lack of pace and adequate challenge in the way in which these resources are used to support learning. Students' attitudes vary, with most valuing the many opportunities the school provides for them to become better informed citizens through community and charitable activities. Many students, in Years 10 and 11, question the status given to the subject's teaching because of its location in a form period just before lunchtime.
154. The subject is well led with a clear vision of how it can contribute to the students' development. A good scheme of work, together with assessment, recording and reporting procedures, is in place. Significant developments have been made in establishing citizenship. Management of the subject is satisfactory. The connection between the taught curriculum and planned curricular and community activities is not yet explicit in the scheme of work. Opportunities for students to demonstrate and present their achievements are underdeveloped and restricted in Years 10 and 11 by the teaching methodology frequently adopted. There is insufficient training and support for teachers who have little experience or expertise in teaching the subject. It is making a good contribution to the students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development as well as beginning to increase their understanding of communities and society. The breadth of opportunities provided by the school for participation and involvement in active citizenship is enormous.

Work-related learning

155. Work-related learning (WRL) was sampled. It is very effective, has a positive impact on students' understanding of the workplace and on their achievement, and statutory requirements are met. Key strengths are:
- There is a good range of work experience for all students.
 - There is a rich curriculum for Year 10 students that includes work-related options.
 - An enterprising life and work skills course for selected students is provided in Year 11.
 - Work related learning is well managed and monitored.
156. Work experience is provided in collaboration with a local business partnership, which assesses health and safety practices at the placements. Before the students attend their work experience, a whole day is devoted to talks by members of the business community about the expectations of employers. Afterwards, a further day is devoted to a debriefing of the students about their own experiences, in the presence of some of their employers. This enables students to improve significantly their understanding of the workplace, its demands and responsibilities, and the qualities employers seek.
157. All students in Year 10 have a number of options that are work-related as part of the broadening of their curriculum. These include the Microsoft Academy, which consists of industry standard on-line skills training and GNVQ leisure and tourism. Students can opt to visit the local further education college for half a day per week to study vocational subjects such as health and beauty, animal care or motor mechanics.

Alternatively, some students attend a regular work placement of their own choice for a half day per week.

158. In Year 11, a BTEC foundation diploma in life and work skills is arranged for students selected by the school. This new course is so far successfully meeting the needs of these students, raising their awareness of life beyond school and retaining their enthusiasm for learning. Work experience is occasionally provided on a regular basis for Year 11 students who are finding difficulty in pursuing their courses, although none has been needed this year.
159. Work experience is well evaluated through debriefing activities and other work-related learning is continuously evaluated by the Key Stage 4 director. The selection of students for the Year 11 BTEC course is carried out after GCSE options have been made and occurs as part of the review process to ensure that the needs of all students are best met.
160. At the end of their time in school, students are ready for employment, with high levels of competence in the use of ICT, and well-developed independent thinking and problem-solving skills.

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM

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

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

Level 3 GCE AS level courses

| Subject | Number entered | % gaining grades A-E | | % gaining grades A-B | | Average point score | |
|-----------------------|----------------|----------------------|---------|----------------------|---------|---------------------|---------|
| | | School | England | School | England | School | England |
| Art and design | 7 | 85 | 78.3 | 14 | 21.6 | 30 | 28.5 |
| Communication studies | 11 | 100 | 87.2 | 36 | 24.9 | 40 | 32.8 |
| English literature | 15 | 73 | 86.2 | 7 | 17.4 | 27.3 | 29.7 |
| Geography | 3 | 100 | 75.5 | 33 | 20.4 | 43.3 | 27 |
| History | 8 | 75 | 82.2 | 12.5 | 20.8 | 21.25 | 29.2 |
| Mathematics | 5 | 80 | 59.9 | 40 | 14.1 | 30 | 20.5 |
| Sociology | 2 | 100 | 72.1 | 0 | 19.6 | 35 | 25.9 |
| Vocational studies | 1 | 100 | 56.7 | 0 | 8.9 | 30 | 18 |

Note: AS results listed here are those “cashed in” and may differ from those referred to in subject paragraphs, where inspectors take account of the full range of AS results

Level 3 GCE A level and VCE courses

| Subject | Number entered | % gaining grades A-E | | % gaining grades A-B | | Average point score | |
|-----------------------|----------------|----------------------|---------|----------------------|---------|---------------------|---------|
| | | School | England | School | England | School | England |
| Art and design | 3 | 100 | 98.3 | 33.3 | 50.2 | 73.3 | 87.1 |
| Biology | 1 | 100 | 96.6 | 100 | 40 | 100 | 79.3 |
| Chemistry | 1 | 100 | 97.7 | 100 | 50 | 100 | 85.7 |
| Communication studies | 6 | 100 | 99.2 | 50 | 40.4 | 83.3 | 83.5 |
| English literature | 6 | 66.7 | 99.4 | 0 | 44.9 | 40 | 85.5 |
| History | 1 | 100 | 99 | 0 | 45.6 | 40 | 85.1 |

| | | | | | | | |
|----------------------------|----|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Mathematics | 3 | 66.6 | 96.8 | 33.3 | 56.6 | 60 | 89.5 |
| Other social studies | 3 | 33.3 | 97.4 | 0 | 42.5 | 26.7 | 81.6 |
| Sociology | 1 | 100 | 98.5 | 0 | 45.3 | 80 | 84.6 |
| Sports/PE studies | 1 | 100 | 97.8 | 0 | 30.9 | 60 | 75.4 |
| Business VCE | 8 | 100 | 91.6 | 0 | 24.1 | 55 | 67.9 |
| Health and social care VCE | 13 | 100 | 93.5 | 30 | 24.9 | 81.5 | 70 |
| Performing arts VCE | 1 | 100 | 94.7 | 0 | 48.8 | 60 | 85.5 |
| Science VCE | 6 | 100 | 89.9 | 0 | 10.2 | 80 | 85.5 |
| ICT VCE | 16 | 100 | 88.3 | 18.8 | 26.9 | 75 | 67.8 |
| Leisure and recreation VCE | 8 | 100 | 90.7 | 50 | 18.3 | 87.5 | 64.6 |

Level 2 vocational qualifications

| Qualification | No in final year | % gaining qualification | | % gaining merit | | % gaining distinction | |
|------------------------|------------------|-------------------------|---------|-----------------|---------|-----------------------|---------|
| | | School | England | School | England | School | England |
| Business studies | 6 | 50 | N/a* | 0 | N/a | 0 | N/a |
| Health and social care | 2 | 50 | N/a* | 0 | N/a | 0 | N/a |
| Art and design | 7 | 42 | N/a* | 42 | N/a | 0 | N/a |

*Note: The percentage of students nationally aged 16-18 obtaining Level 2 intermediate vocational qualifications was 80 per cent.

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

The focus in this curriculum area is on English. No provision is made for post-16 modern foreign languages.

English

Provision in English is **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Where teaching is planned to challenge and involve students they respond well and make good progress.
- Students appreciate the current efforts of teachers to support their learning and achievement.
- Some lessons occur after school and are poorly attended.
- The standard of teaching is variable and is sometimes limited by low expectations of what students are capable of doing.
- The absence of the teacher with responsibility for sixth form English has resulted in students being inadequately taught and supported.

Commentary

161. Results in the GCE A level literature examinations in 2004 were very low, as they were in 2003. Because a number of students did not do as well as expected,

achievement was unsatisfactory. This was also the case for AS level, where students generally underperformed.

162. Evidence from the inspection indicated why students often do less well than expected. Students' writing lacks a critical edge, and often gives an account of what happens in a text (as in lengthy pieces on *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*) rather than offering insights into intention and effect. Students do not seem to have developed skills of analysis and tight expression, and are therefore disadvantaged when having to think rapidly or write under pressure of time. It was also the case that in one lesson of the three observed, too few opportunities were planned for students systematically to develop and refine their responses to texts and to each other's views and readings. Students often come into the sixth form with modest GCSE results and therefore need concerted help to develop confidence in their capacity to think, talk and write with originality and flair.
163. The quality of teaching and learning were satisfactory overall, although this judgement covers a range from good to unsatisfactory. In lessons where there are high expectations, variety and challenge, students respond well and make good progress. For example, in a lesson focusing on techniques for comparing previously unseen texts, students were drawn into insightful and intelligent readings through skilfully managed opportunities to reflect, discuss and present their conclusions. The one lesson that was unsatisfactory was very poorly attended (it was timetabled after school), and the approach was closer to spoon-feeding than to offering intellectual challenge and a forum for independent learning.
164. A similar disparity was evident also in marking. Teachers' comments on work occasionally had a very clear focus on what students needed to do to improve, but were more usually perfunctory and of limited use in advancing skills and understanding. Students nevertheless recognise that they are being much better supported this year than last. The teacher who has taken temporary charge of sixth form English has made an immediate and beneficial impact. A thorough audit of the curriculum and teaching methods has been made, and a clear set of procedures for improvement has been identified. This commitment and clear-sightedness deserve acknowledgement.
165. However, the history of inappropriate choices of texts and methods, together with marking of uncertain regularity and consistency, means that leadership and management of the subject in the sixth form is unsatisfactory. Improvement since the last inspection is also unsatisfactory, because of the abiding legacy of what has gone before.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

166. Sixth form students have generally good communication skills in both speech and writing. There is provision for the teaching of Key Skills, and sixth form students who need to improve their grade have the opportunity to follow a course to enable students to re-take GCSE English. Inspectors noted particularly good encouragement for discussion and presentation in mathematics, science, music and ICT. The impact of outstanding provision for ICT across the curriculum has a clear connection with students' confident powers of communication. Additionally, the extraordinarily wide range of opportunities for extra-curricular experience of travel, art, music, drama,

public speaking and much else, encourages students to be interested, interesting and articulate.

MATHEMATICS

The inspection focus was on GCE AS and A2 courses in mathematics.

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The few students pursuing GCE Advanced level courses achieve well.
- Teaching is by experienced and knowledgeable staff.
- Very good provision is made for high attaining students who have English as an additional language.

Commentary

167. Only a small number of students pursue Advanced level courses in mathematics, a situation that has not changed since the last inspection. They mainly come from Intermediate rather than Higher tier GCSE studies. For them, the demands are considerable but, commendably, most take at least an AS in the subject, and a few proceed to A2 level. The majority successfully gain an award. Overall standards are below national averages, but achievement is good.
168. Teaching is good, with much that is very good, with knowledgeable exposition and awareness of how to deliver the subject. The detailed exemplars given in mechanics on using equations of motion in extended questions enabled Year 12 students to make encouraging progress in subsequent exercises. They coped with basic integration in the core mathematics course, and received clear guidance about networks in decision mathematics. Lower-attaining students find the developmental work in algebra, calculus and trigonometry particularly difficult. Year 13 students know how to differentiate $(ax+b)^n$, were taught how to integrate such expressions, and succeeded in answering a series of textbook questions that followed. Relationships are good. Students whose command of English is more limited but whose mathematical skills are well advanced attend several classes, are given work appropriate to their needs and make very good progress.
169. Leadership and management are good. Full resources are available and interactive whiteboards are well used. Progress since the last inspection is satisfactory.

Mathematics across the curriculum

170. Timetabled lessons are provided for students seeking to improve their GCSE grades, but clashes with other commitments mean that attendance is variable. Of those that complete the course, some succeed in achieving grade C. Within the broader curriculum, the mathematical knowledge of students is generally adequate for their studies and further help is provided as necessary. In science, accurate calculations of yield from reactions were undertaken, whilst good use of spreadsheets was evident in the leisure and recreation course and in ICT. Chi-squared and Spearman's rank correlation tests were very well used in sociology and psychology, with students able to interpret the data.

SCIENCE

The focus in this area was on the one advanced post-16 science course leading to AVCE certification.

Provision for science is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Advanced level examination results in science are above average.
- The excellent use of ICT helps students to maximise their achievement.
- Excellent facilities fully support students' high achievement.
- Teachers have a very good command of their subject.
- Relationships, encouragement and consequently students' self-confidence are very good.
- Coursework is very well organised.

Commentary

171. A level examination results in 2003 were above average, were equally good in 2004, and in 2002, they were very high. In each year, all students passed. Results for AVCE are broadly in line with the national average, and again, all students passed. On all courses, students gained grades that exceeded the predictions made using their GCSE results so that achievement in examinations is very good, from starting points which are below those usually seen on entry to the sixth form.
172. Standards of work seen in lessons are above average. Students understand the use of aspirin, and produce high quality presentations, demonstrating above average speaking skills and making very effective use of ICT to do so; ICT competence is well above average. Dissection skills and understanding of the function of the heart are above average. Detailed understanding of the causes and prevention of disease and the way in which heart rate varies with fitness are about average for some students and above average for others.
173. Achievement is very good because teachers have high expectations of both work and behaviour. Lessons are demanding and proceed quickly so that students learn at a fast pace. Teachers prepare students very well for research activities. ICT facilities are excellent and make a substantial contribution to raising standards and achievement.
174. Teaching and learning are both very good, and in some lessons, they are excellent. Teachers' command of their subject is very good and excellent use of ICT makes lessons demanding and interesting. Teachers provide many very effective opportunities for students to work independently and students do this work carefully and responsibly. Teachers set high standards and frequently give encouragement and advice; as a result, students set high standards for themselves and become self-confident, independent and willing to work hard. Teaching and coursework are very well organised: marking is very thorough and very good advice helps students to improve. Very good relationships based on mutual respect support a very strong work ethos for high quality learning.

175. Leadership and management are very good. The AVCE double award science course is well suited to the needs of the students. To raise standards, strong emphasis is placed on independent learning, including highly innovative use of ICT. Resources, including ICT, are very good and each student is loaned a laptop computer; this successfully motivates students and results in high achievement. Many teachers have become expert users of ICT. Records of marks are very thorough and their use to support students is excellent. Marking and target setting are very good and regular advice about how to do better is provided. Excellent facilities, including the cinema and sports centre, support high achievement by students during presentations and investigations.
176. Improvement since the previous inspection has been very good. Achievement is now very good and excellent use is made of ICT to interest students and to raise standards.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Achievement is very good because of very good teaching.
- Students are enthusiastic, committed and learn responsibly.
- Excellent leadership ensures the most effective use of resources to support teaching and learning.
- The outstanding ICT facilities, both within the department and across the sixth form, enable students' independent learning to be very well supported.

Commentary

177. Standards are above the national average. In 2004, all students gained pass grades or better in their AVCE qualifications. This is very good achievement for these students because they have far exceeded their target grades. Although there are many more boys than girls electing to study ICT in the sixth form, they have both gained similar achievement. Students with special educational needs are well catered for and make good progress in lessons. Standards over the past few years have improved steadily.
178. Teaching and learning are very good. Excellent subject knowledge and extremely high expectation and challenge in lessons have inspired students to enjoy ICT and take responsibility for their own learning. There is exceptional use of computing and software resources. Planning of lessons is very good. Well-designed worksheets enable students of all abilities to make rapid progress. The marking of students' work is excellent, so that students are fully aware of the progress they are making and how they can improve. All students are taught very well, enabling them to sustain very good achievement. Students are given strong support from their teachers, who work hard to excite and motivate them. As a result, students are making very good progress and many want to pursue a career in ICT.
179. Leadership is excellent. The head of department has great vision and strives to improve his department in every way possible. The school is at the cutting edge of innovation in its use of ICT and in the wide variety of courses on offer to the sixth form.

Management is very good. Teachers are deployed very well and they receive excellent support from the head of department. Teaching and standards are closely monitored and very effective steps are taken to improve. There is an outstandingly strong team of teachers and technicians who are highly valued.

180. Resources are excellent with all students having permanent access to a laptop for the duration of the course. There is a wide range of equipment to satisfy the needs of all of the technical courses on offer. Accommodation is very good. There are areas for students to work productively and independently in their free time.
181. Improvement since the previous inspection has been excellent. The academic ICT courses are supplemented by the addition of an extensive range of technical courses taught by highly skilled teachers.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

182. The provision of ICT across the curriculum in the sixth form is outstanding. Students are using ICT in all subjects to extend their learning and achievement. There is excellent provision in science, design and technology, and leisure and recreation, where there is great innovation in the use of ICT. Eligible students are given laptops that they can keep for the duration of their stay in the sixth form.

HUMANITIES

183. The inspection focus in this area was on sociology. However, samples of work in geography, history, law and psychology were inspected. Provision for courses in law and psychology include a weekly lesson using video-conferencing facilities from an outside provider, as well as in-school tutorial and supported study lessons.
184. In the one lesson of **geography** observed, where the teaching was excellent, Year 13 students responded confidently to the significant challenge provided and were able to demonstrate very secure levels of knowledge and understanding of the technical terminology used in the study of glacial and periglacial landforms. No **history** teaching was seen, but students feel well supported in their studies and benefit from a regular individual tutorial, as well as guidance on their research. Teaching provides challenge and enables students to consolidate and extend their understanding.
185. In a GCE A level **law** lesson, the very good teaching enabled students to achieve highly as they explored meticulously the legal bases for voluntary manslaughter. In the GCE A level **psychology** lesson that was inspected, students were systematically challenged to learn by the very good teaching. They continually showed high levels of understanding of social science methodology in their study of exploring and measuring human attraction.

Sociology

Provision in sociology is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Consistently good teaching and learning enable students to achieve very well.

- Very good systems for monitoring and tracking students' progress help them to improve the standard and quality of their work.
- Students have excellent attitudes to their work and enjoy very productive relationships, with both peers and their teachers.
- The subject benefits from good leadership and management.
- Standards of basic skills need to be improved to support students' learning and achievement.

Commentary

186. Students' attainment on entry to the course varies, some having a grade in the A* to C range in the subject at GCSE. Results over recent years at GCE AS and A level are too small for analysis or comparison with national standards. However, the majority either achieve or exceed their target grade – some with very modest prior attainment. Standards of work seen and observation of lessons show that current students are on course to reach or exceed their predicted grade.
187. As they move through Year 12, students quickly acquire knowledge and understanding of social science methodology and of the theoretical bases of the topics they are studying. In both Years 12 and 13, the use of case studies and reports of scholars' empirical work enable students to see methodology and theory being operated in practice. This also provides opportunities for developing the higher order skills as students learn how to analyse and critically evaluate research methods, empirical findings and theoretical ideas.
188. Students make very good progress in the use of ICT, for research and for the presentation and analysis of data. Progress is less marked in literacy and the application of number. Essays and notes are well structured but not all students find it easy to acquire a more sophisticated and structured use of language in assignments. Increasingly, students find the interpretation of both quantitative and qualitative data demanding.
189. All students are enabled to achieve very well as a result of the consistently good quality teaching and learning. Teaching is very well planned and benefits from: good subject knowledge; high expectations and levels of challenge; the deployment of a range of methods and well-chosen resources; and a real understanding of how to meet the range of learning needs present in both Year 12 and 13 groups. The teaching is sensitively structured so that the learning provides both continuity and progression in developing conceptual understanding from that provided in the weekly distance-learning lesson. The range of methods used takes account of the preferred learning styles of students. Students have constant access to materials and facilities in the course base and to the two teachers involved. Work is very well marked, and provides detailed feedback that helps students to improve both the standard and quality of future assignments.
190. The course is well led and managed. Provision has been planned to make maximum use of the distance-learning course within the tutorials and supported study lessons. Each student's progress is carefully tracked and monitored and helpful targets are set.
191. This subject was not part of the curriculum at the time of the last inspection.

ENGINEERING, TECHNOLOGY AND MANUFACTURING

192. There was no inspection focus in this curriculum area. However, one Year 12 **design and technology (resistant materials)** lesson was inspected. The excellent teaching and learning enabled students to achieve very highly as they worked with great determination to produce a manufacturing plan to a high specification.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

193. The inspection focus in this area was on music. A sample of other lessons was also seen. In one lesson of art Years 12 and 13 students explored art history in preparation for their visit to London. Throughout the lesson, teaching, learning and achievement were satisfactory. In the Year 13 media studies lesson observed, the very good teaching and learning enabled all students to achieve highly as they analysed the conventions and theory, as well as practice, of music video presentations in relation to the expectations of the viewer. In two lessons of performing arts that were inspected, very good teaching and well-organised and challenging learning in one lesson helped Years 12 and 13 students to explore scenes from *Blood Brothers* in preparation for a diary recording. They achieved highly in undertaking this demanding task. In the other lesson that was inspected, the excellent teaching and learning helped students to explore in great depth themes from the same play before rehearsing key moments from the piece, and promoted outstanding achievement.

194. In all of the lessons sampled in this curriculum area, students' attitudes to their work were never less than very good but more often, excellent, except in art where they were satisfactory.

Music

Provision in music is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is very good use of ICT.
- Lessons are well planned with very good use of resources, and students achieve well.
- Students receive a high level of individual attention with an emphasis on helping students to find out things for themselves.
- The students' use of technical vocabulary is limited.
- Students' compositions lack extended melodic structures.
- The teachers have very good subject knowledge and use it well to engage students' interest.

Commentary

195. The number of students entered for examinations in 2004 is too small for valid comparisons with the national statistics. However, comparisons with the students' performance in other subjects indicate underperformance in recent years. Lack of instrumental experience has been a major factor and this is still affecting standards in work seen. Overall standards are below average. Compositions are weak. Although there is some good exploitation of timbre and rhythmic texture, melodic development is limited and over-reliant on the repetition of short phrases. Given the standards on entry to the course, however, and particularly the lack of previous instrumental experience, the students are achieving well.

196. The quality of teaching and learning is good and assessment is good. The teachers use an effective tutorial style that gives a high level of individual attention. They have very good subject knowledge and use it well to illustrate their clear explanations and to interest the students. There is very good use of ICT and other resources. Lessons are well planned. The teachers use probing questions to make students think and draw upon their prior knowledge to work things out for themselves. The students' response to music is often perceptive but their use of technical language when writing and speaking about music is too limited. When composing, they produce good melodic ideas but then do not develop them sufficiently into extended structures. The students use ICT well and work confidently with sophisticated software. Assessment is detailed because of the high level of individual attention so that students are well informed as to their progress.
197. Leadership and management are both good. The subject leader provides a good role model. The department has set about improving performance standards by developing and organising an effective programme of instrumental teaching. The very small number of students has necessitated combining courses and year groups, and the department has managed this well. The department makes a very good contribution to the students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. It does this through its choices of listening music and the extra-curricular opportunities it provides for students both in the sixth form and main school. At the time of the previous inspection, music courses were not offered in the sixth form.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

The inspection focus in this curriculum area was on leisure and recreation. Work was also sampled in GCE A level **physical education**. In the one lesson inspected, the careful planning and good teaching enabled Year 13 students to learn and achieve well in exploring energy systems.

Leisure and recreation

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards in the 2004 examinations were well above the national average and represent excellent achievement.
- In lessons where teaching is very good, learning always has a brisk pace.
- Students have a highly positive attitude to the course and work very productively, individually and in groups.
- All students make excellent use of the laptop computers provided.

Commentary

198. Results for the AVCE course are invariably above or well above the national average, with all students who complete the course gaining at least a pass grade. Four of the eight students entered for the 2004 AVCE qualification gained one of the top grades, and the overall performance of candidates was well above the national average. This represents outstanding achievement for this cohort, with students gaining grades higher than their GCSE results would predict.

199. Current students are performing with similar achievement, demonstrating a very good understanding of relevant leisure and tourism terminology and the demands of the course specifications. In developing a leisure and recreation business plan, students demonstrated outstanding skills in teamwork, planning and financial budgeting. Year 12 and 13 students work productively and co-operatively in the same teaching group. They are all expert users of laptop computers and have produced very good coursework that includes PowerPoint presentations, reports and a range of charts, diagrams and tables to illustrate their work.
200. Teaching and learning are very good, being characterised by very well prepared and relevant lessons that are briskly and authoritatively delivered by two knowledgeable teachers. For example, in a very good lesson developing customer service skills, students worked productively and co-operatively in a range of activities, including role play and group work, to explore effective telephone communication. Students' practical coaching skills were evident in a series of stimulating lessons where a digital camera was used to record and analyse performance. Teachers maintain students' high levels of interest by ensuring that lessons do not become too teacher-centred and these students, as sixth formers, are given every opportunity to demonstrate, lead and present sessions. Students' work is regularly assessed and feedback provides a thorough evaluation and detailed guidance about how to improve the standard and quality of future assignments. Progress is carefully tracked and monitored. Students appreciate the generous availability of staff and the support and guidance offered.
201. The course is offered within the PE department alongside GCE A level and suits the range of needs and aspirations of sixth form students. The course is very well led and managed and the two teachers involved work collaboratively as a team to ensure that the work is planned and taught effectively. Both have an expert knowledge of the content, as well as of the vocational and assessment requirements of the course. The department's development plan contains insufficient detail, and as yet, has no formal preparation strategy for the change of course (to GCE A level sports studies) being planned for the next academic year. The department makes very good use of the on-site leisure centre and has used a number of visits and outside speakers to support students' learning. All students on the leisure and recreation course also follow the Community Sports Leader Award programme. This greatly assists them in developing their personal, leadership and coaching skills. There has been good progress since the last inspection.

BUSINESS

Business studies

Provision in business studies is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve well as a result of very well prepared and structured lessons.
- The head of department is an excellent role model and has high expectations of students.
- The assessment and recording of students' work and progress are thorough and used effectively to monitor, track and evaluate students' achievement.

- The subject lacks a base to provide identity and a coherent learning environment for students.
- Although students work productively, contributions by them in class are often limited.

Commentary

202. Despite entering the sixth form with below average levels of attainment, all students entered for the AVCE business qualification have gained at least a pass in the last two years, although only one student gained a top grade (in 2003). Overall, results are around the national average, representing good achievement where most perform better than their GCSE results would predict. Current Year 12 and Year 13 students are taught in the same groups and, although this causes problems initially for some students, particularly those with no business studies background, they quickly learn to work productively and co-operatively and make good use of the very effective support and guidance offered by teachers.
203. Only three of the six students entered for the intermediate GNVQ in 2004 gained a pass grade. Current students, however, are achieving well and have a sound knowledge of business terminology; for example, of business objectives, the advantages and disadvantages of different forms of business organisation, and the identification of leadership styles. Students' portfolios are generally very well presented, contain work which matches the relevant specification criteria and show a good knowledge of the application of relevant business terminology, such as when applying a marketing strategy to launch new products.
204. Teaching and learning are good with very well prepared and structured lessons which match the demands of the assessment criteria. Lessons are authoritatively and enthusiastically taught and students, although often reluctant to contribute in class, work productively as individuals and in groups, and make good progress. For example, in a good lesson introducing the 'business at work' unit, the teacher's expert knowledge and clearly delivered explanations helped students to apply their knowledge of different types of organisation to their portfolio work. The teacher's pleasant but productive engagement of students in a lesson introducing the human resources unit ensured all were able to develop an understanding of the recruitment process and job analysis.
205. Student portfolios are assessed thoroughly and include positive and relevant feedback which clearly indicates to students how they can improve their work. Students work productively out of lessons and demonstrate very good ICT and research skills, and this is apparent in their portfolio work. They have a very positive attitude to their studies and appreciate the access to staff and the support and guidance offered.
206. As stated in the main school report, leadership and management are good, with the head of department setting high aspirations in terms of student performance and having a clear and enthusiastic vision for developing the subject further. This includes broadening the curriculum provision by developing the Level 2 courses in the sixth form. However, the departmental business plan does not contain sharp enough targets to really challenge the department and to measure success. Business links are expanding but are not yet extensive enough to provide a significant contribution to students' learning. There has been good progress since the last inspection.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

207. There was no detailed focus in this curriculum area. However, work was sampled and one Year 12 lesson was observed in the **health and social care** course where very good teaching supported students' exploration of the application of external criteria to their assignments on promoting healthy eating. The thorough approach to the analysis of the assessment of the assignment and the students' approach to the topic resulted in very good learning and achievement.

PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT AND GENERAL PROGRAMMES

No provision was sampled in this area.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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

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