

INSPECTION REPORT

SIR CHRISTOPHER HATTON SCHOOL

Wellingborough

LEA area: Northamptonshire

Unique reference number: 122122

Headteacher: Victoria Bishop

Lead inspector: William Goodall

Dates of inspection: 7th - 10th March 2005

Inspection number: 268911

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

© Crown copyright 2005

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

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

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Comprehensive
School category: Foundation
Age range of pupils: 11-18
Gender of pupils: Mixed
Number on roll: 1168

School address: The Pyghtle
Wellingborough
Northamptonshire
Postcode: NN8 4RP

Telephone number: (01933) 226077
Fax number: (01933) 271424

Appropriate authority: The governing body
Name of chair of governors: Major Derek Hooton

Date of previous inspection: 19th March 1999

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Sir Christopher Hatton School is a large co-educational comprehensive school in the town of Wellingborough. It has grown in size recently, and now has 1,168 students from the age of 11 to 18, including a sixth form of 137. It is a foundation school and has recently become a specialist mathematics and computing school. Most students come from the town and surrounding villages. The socio-economic circumstances of the pupils are very varied, but around the national average overall. Attainment on entry is around the national average, but the school used to admit ten per cent of its intake each year based on a test, and some of these pupils remain in GCSE classes and the sixth form. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals, 11 per cent, is around the national average, as is that of pupils identified as having special educational needs, 16.5 per cent. The proportion of those with statements of special need is slightly higher than average, at four per cent. These are mainly linked to moderate learning difficulties and social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. Most pupils are from a white British heritage, although there are about 20 per cent from other backgrounds, mainly Asian or Caribbean. There are ten pupils whose first language is not English. The school was awarded a Sportsmark in 2002, and a Schools' Achievement Award in 2003.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
15127	W Goodall	Lead inspector	Drama
15522	B Morgan	Lay inspector	
2784	P Crumpton	Team inspector	English English as an additional language
19379	G Coombs	Team inspector	Mathematics
2795	H White	Team inspector	Science Chemistry
20619	J Hazlewood	Team inspector	Information and communication technology (ICT)
4877	S Smith	Team inspector	Art and design
31701	G Rudland	Team inspector	Music Citizenship
28089	T Brotherhood	Team inspector	Design and technology ICT
31218	T Allen	Team inspector	Geography
15458	W Dewar	Team inspector	History Work-related learning
4493	P Hall	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages
2628	J Edwards	Team inspector	Physical education
31576	H Farr	Team inspector	Religious education
10915	G Henderson	Team inspector	Special educational needs

The inspection contractor was:

Tribal Education
1 - 4 Portland Square
Bristol
BS2 8RR

Any concerns or complaints about the inspection or the report should be made initially to the inspection contractor. The procedures are set out in the leaflet '*Complaining about Ofsted Inspections*', which is available from Ofsted Publications Centre (telephone 07002 637 833) or Ofsted's website (www.ofsted.gov.uk).

REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT	4 - 7
PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE MAIN INSPECTION FINDINGS	
STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS	8 - 14
Standards achieved in subjects and courses	
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	
QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL	14 - 22
Teaching and learning	
The curriculum	
Care, guidance and support	
Partnership with parents, other schools and the community	
LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT	22 - 25
PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES	26 - 58
SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 AND 4	
SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM	
PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS	59

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

This is a good and improving school, which provides good value for money. The headteacher provides very good leadership, supported by governors and other key staff. The school has begun to address most of the issues raised in the last inspection over the last 15 months. The teachers and management have successfully taken on a range of initiatives and staff development programmes that have analysed the school's weaknesses and, to a large part, remedied them. There is a positive ethos for learning in the school.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The clear vision and leadership of the headteacher to move the school forwards.
- The pupils' good progress and achievement through the school and the above average standards seen during the inspection in Years 9, 11 and the sixth form.
- Teaching and learning are good and some aspects are very good influenced by the very positive attitudes of teachers and pupils.
- The provision for pupils with special educational needs is good but support for the small number of pupils with English as an additional language is weak.
- Provision for religious education in the sixth form is unsatisfactory for those not taking the examination course.
- Assessment is not always used effectively to identify specific ways that pupils can improve their standards.
- There are some inconsistencies in the way policies and strategies are put into action.
- The provision for ICT is satisfactory in specialist classes but is not used enough in subjects across the curriculum.

The school has made satisfactory improvement since its last inspection. Many of the actions taken to address the key issues are recent, and have been taken up at different rates in different areas. Development planning has improved, as has the monitoring of teaching and target setting for pupils. The issue of sixth form religious education remains, and although standards of information and communication technology (ICT) have improved, the provision for ICT across other subjects is still unsatisfactory. The other weaknesses identified in the last report have all been addressed. As well as this, the leadership has improved from satisfactory to good, and sixth form standards in examinations from below to in line with national averages. The proportion of good teaching observed has improved considerably. The impact of the recent specialist school status is not yet evident.

Pupils' achievement is good overall. Test results and assessments in 2004 at the end of Year 9 are well above national averages, and pupils have made very good progress. Overall results in the 2004 GCSE examinations are above average, and compared to the standards that pupils had when they entered the school, their progress is good. The school met the targets that had been predicted. Standards in AS and A-level GCE examinations are around the national average, and students' achievement is also satisfactory. Over 95 per cent of students at the end of Year 13 enter university. Boys' results in the 2004 GCSE examinations were below those of girls, as is the situation nationally, but in the sixth form the boys do significantly better than the girls. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well, but those whose first language is not English are hampered by a lack of support. Current standards are above average at the end of Years 9 and 11 and in the sixth form.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

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

The development of pupils' personal qualities is good. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good, particularly their moral and social development. Overall, pupils' and students' attitudes are very good, and behaviour around the school is good. Attendance levels in the school are satisfactory, although they have fallen slightly; in the sixth form they are good. Relationships between pupils, and between pupils and staff are very good.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education is good. Teaching and learning are good overall. The use of assessment is satisfactory, targets are set well, but the school does not take this a step further and help pupils to know what they have to do to improve. The curriculum is good, and there are now a good range of courses for pupils in Year 10. Only academic courses are offered in the sixth form. There are good opportunities for enrichment through after school classes and programmes. The accommodation is worn out in some areas but satisfactory for the planned curriculum, and resources do not limit achievement. Arrangements to ensure pupils' care, welfare and safety are good. Links with the parents and the community have improved, and are now satisfactory and good in some areas.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are both good. They are satisfactory in the sixth form. The headteacher has provided clear and timely direction over the past year to address the issues raised in the last inspection report. She has been supported well by governors, senior management and other key staff. Many of the initiatives introduced are recent, and their implementation is not yet consistent across all areas. Governance is good overall, the governors know the school well, are clear about what needs to be done and how to achieve it. The budget is managed well, with clear strategies for how the specialist college money will be spent. Administration is very efficient.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Some parents and pupils expressed concerns about poor behaviour, and the inspection team looked at this very closely. Overall the behaviour of pupils observed during the week was good. There are incidents of bullying and misbehaviour by a small minority of pupils, but these are dealt with promptly, using the school's policies effectively. The school has operated an "open school" at lunchtimes for many years. This gives pupils the responsibility for their actions. Some benefit from this; others are less responsible. Some parents were concerned about the communication the school has with them; overall it is satisfactory, but the reports to parents need improving.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Continue to develop the use of assessment to support and improve learning and drive up standards.
- Address the inconsistencies in the way policies are put into action.
- Develop the use of ICT to support learning across all subjects.
- Improve the provision for pupils whose first language is not English;

and, to meet statutory requirements:

- Ensure that all sixth form students have appropriate opportunities for religious education.

THE SIXTH FORM AT THE SIR CHRISTOPHER HATTON SCHOOL

The sixth form of 137 students are all studying for AS and A-level GCE examinations.

OVERALL EVALUATION

The overall effectiveness of the sixth form is **satisfactory**. Standards in the 2004 A-level GCSE examinations were around the national average, which is an improvement on 2003, when they were below it. The work seen in class was better, and was good overall. The small number in the sixth form means that making statistical comparisons is difficult. Boys did significantly better than girls last year, but this difference was not noted in the classes seen. About one third of students stay on to the sixth form, all taking academic courses. This is a smaller than usual proportion. Their achievement is satisfactory, based on their progress from their GCSE examinations, and almost all go on to higher education. Some students take only two examinations in the sixth form, which reduces their overall points score, and there are no alternative qualifications offered for them. Teaching and learning are good, and relationships very positive. Students' attitudes are very good, and the sixth form has a strong role in the school. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The overall cost-effectiveness and value for money of the sixth form is **satisfactory**. Improvements since the last inspection have been **satisfactory**.

The main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Very positive relationships, attitudes and behaviour.
- A very good record of university entrance.
- Good support and guidance for students to go on to higher education.
- Good teaching and learning on the AS and A level GCE courses, with examples of very good practice.
- There is a limited range of courses available for those pupils who wish to continue with their studies.

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

Curriculum area	Evaluation
English, languages and communication	Provision in English is good . There is very good teaching and students have very a positive attitude which helps their studies.

	Provision in French is good . Teaching is good and challenging and students are very well motivated to succeed.
Mathematics	Provision in mathematics is good . Teachers have good knowledge of the subject and students achieve well in response to good teaching.
Science	Provision in chemistry is good . The very good teaching helps students to achieve well.
Engineering, technology and manufacturing	Provision in design and technology is very good . Teachers have expert knowledge of the subject and students respond very well to very good teaching.
Information and communication technology	Provision for ICT is good . There is very good teaching and students have positive attitudes to their work.
Humanities	Provision in geography good . Good teaching and learning leads to high standards. Provision for religious education is unsatisfactory , as not all students have access to the statutory requirements. The provision for the examination course is however good with good teaching.
Visual and performing arts and media	Provision for art and design is satisfactory . There is good specialist teaching of the subject, although limited space. Provision in drama is very good . Students are very enthusiastic and receive very good tuition, which helps them to achieve very well.
Hospitality, sports, leisure and travel	Provision for physical education is good . There is good teaching and students have very positive attitudes to study.

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 focus for the sixth form is university entrance, which enables the support and guidance to be concentrated on specific ends, and in these they are **good**. The mature and responsible attitudes to work and behaviour also confirm the **very good** relationships between staff and students seen. The head of the sixth form looks after the students conscientiously and knows them well. Students in the sixth form also have access to good advice and guidance from tutors and the head of the sixth form which helps them in their day-to-day work, and in matters such as university and college placements. The monitoring of students' progress and pastoral support is well established. This has provided a positive model for similar developments elsewhere in the school.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE SIXTH FORM

The leadership and management of the sixth form are both **satisfactory**. Day-to-day management and administration of the sixth form are effective and supported by a handbook for students. The monitoring of teaching and use of data to predict examination performance and establish targets are good. A closer analysis of examination results to improve learning and the achievement of individuals beyond the present satisfactory level is not, as yet, fully developed. Governors are aware of the strengths, weaknesses and current issues relating to the sixth form. They are aware of their statutory duty to provide for the teaching of religious education in the sixth form, and necessary plans have been identified together with a related timescale. The finances are appropriately managed and monitored.

STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

The students who join the sixth form show considerable interest and a keenness to do well in their studies. They are articulate, polite and enthusiastic young people who have a real commitment to the school. They say that recent developments in the school are having a beneficial effect upon their learning and development. They enjoy taking responsibility when offered the opportunity as for example in acting as mentors for the youngest pupils when they join the school and by their participation in both the school council and the recently developed anti-bullying strategy. The sixth form students interviewed were very supportive of what the school does for them, enjoyed their studies and felt they were given a lot of useful information and advice. They were surprised at the concerns raised in the questionnaire. The inspection team agreed with them and noted the small number of questionnaires returned.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE MAIN INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in subjects and courses

Overall standards are above the national average, and the pupils' achievement is **good**. Test results and assessments in 2004 for pupils at the end of Year 9 are well above national averages, and they have made very good progress. Overall results in the 2004 GCSE examinations are above average, and compared to the standards that pupils had when they entered the school, their progress is good. The school met the targets that had been predicted. Standards in AS and A-level GCE examinations are satisfactory compared to the national average; over 95 per cent of students at the end of Year 13 enter university. Boys' results in the 2004 GCSE examinations are overall below those of girls, as is the situation nationally, but in the sixth form the boys do significantly better than the girls. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well, but those whose first language is not English are hampered by a lack of support.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils' and students' achievement is good overall.
- Examination results and assessment in 2004 for pupils at the end of Year 9 are well above national and local education authority averages.
- Overall results in the 2004 GCSE examinations are above average.
- Based on prior attainment the achievement of pupils and students from entry to school till the end of Year 11 is good.
- The achievement of the small number of pupils whose first language is not English is unsatisfactory.

Commentary

1. The standard of pupils' work on entry to the school is average, but by the end of Year 9 they make significant gains in achievement and reach standards in national tests in English, mathematics and science that are well above the averages indicated by the unvalidated data that is available. This is due in part to the good ethos of the school and the good quality of the teaching and support for learning they receive. The standard of work seen in class and in folders for pupils at the end of Year 9 is well above the national average in English, mathematics and science, and is above expectations in science, geography and modern foreign languages. Attainment in all other subjects is average. This represents good achievement as shown by the analysis of data which shows good value added from the standards they had at the age of 11. Systems for gathering data have been recently introduced. They are being developed and used well in some subjects, such as geography, history, drama and science for setting targets to raise standards. However the results are not being used consistently in all subject areas.

STANDARDS IN NATIONAL TESTS AT THE END OF YEAR 9 – AVERAGE POINT SCORES IN 2004

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	36.7 (35.9)	n/a (33.4)

mathematics	39.2 (39.1)	n/a (35.4)
science	35.5 (36.5)	n/a (33.6)

There were 208 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

2. In the 2004 GCSE examinations the percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A* to C grades overall is above the national average and the percentage gaining 5 or more A* to G passes is in line with the national average. A* to C results for drama, English, German and history were well above the national average but well below in the physical education GCSE. The very good results for religious education are of particular significance as it was taken as a short course by all pupils in the year group. The proportion of pupils gaining at least one GCSE is well below the national average. This is in part due to the lack of provision for examination courses for the lower attaining pupils, a situation that has been changed for the present Year 10.

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	56.1 (62)	52 (52)
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*- G grades	90.5 (87)	89 (88)
Percentage of pupils gaining 1 or more A*- G grades	95.0 (94)	96 (96)
Average point score per pupil (best eight subjects)	36.8 (36.8)	34.9 (34.7)

There were 199 pupils in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

3. Pupils' achievement by the end of Year 11 is good. This results from good teaching, the positive attitude of the pupils and the support the pupils receive. In some subjects staff provide additional revision sessions outside school hours as well as one-to-one mentoring for pupils who need help with their work. There is very good preparation for tests and examinations. The very good progress that has been made up to the end of Year 9 flattens out a little, but overall, the progress from the pupils' attainment on entry to the school up to their standards at the end of Year 11, based on a range of indicators, shows that they have achieved well.
4. The standard of work seen for pupils in Year 11 is well above the national average in English, drama, history, and religious education. It is above it in modern foreign languages, mathematics, science, ICT, geography and music, and around the average in other subjects.
5. The performance of boys in examinations is overall below that of girls. This is similar to the national situation, but is in spite of the fact that some subjects, such as geography, have modified the curriculum in an attempt to redress the balance.
6. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well in relation to their capability. This is demonstrated in the standards attained and through their individual educational plans. However a systematic analysis of the data available is not used to indicate more clearly how pupils can build on the standards they have already reached.
7. The standards achieved by pupils for whom English is an additional language are below average, a lack of fluency in language is limiting their progress and their achievement is unsatisfactory. The systems for identifying and supporting these pupils are ineffective, and several receive little practical support for their learning.

8. The school had ten per cent of pupils a year selected by ability in the past. Some of these pupils remain in Years 10 and 11, and the achievement of these and other gifted and talented pupils is good and in line with that of other pupils.
9. Standards of literacy are good across all key stages. The school's implementation of the National Key Stage 3 Strategy has significantly contributed to these standards. A literacy co-ordinator is in place, a working party meets regularly and there is a whole-school literacy policy. As a result of these developments, there has been a positive response amongst the staff, and literacy is contributing significantly to pupils' standards and achievement in a number of subjects. This is particularly the case in science where the head of department is a member of the literacy working party, a departmental literacy policy has been devised, and some lessons have a literacy focus. Most departments are identifying key words for their subject. Writing frames are sometimes used to help pupils structure their writing. All departments are expected to have their own literacy policies, but only a small number have yet done so. Literacy is having a positive impact on standards in English, drama, geography, history, music and science.
10. The quality of pupils' numeracy across the curriculum is good. Pupils use their mathematical skills in a number of subjects, notably science and geography. In science, for example, pupils use their skills in acceleration, distance and time calculations in Year 10 and in ICT mental arithmetic was practised before putting formulae into a spreadsheet. A numeracy working party including teachers from most curriculum areas has produced a whole school policy which has been adopted by all departments and modified to suit their own curriculum. Form tutors use mathematical puzzles in form periods and numeracy activity days have been planned for Years 7 and 8.
11. The use of information and communication technology to support teaching and learning by subjects across the curriculum is unsatisfactory as it was at the last inspection. This is not a satisfactory situation for a school which has just been given a specialist mathematics and computing status. When they are used the standards are satisfactory, but in a limited range. A programme for replacement and refurbishment of computers and accommodation has started since the school acquired its specialist computing status. A working party of subject representatives has very recently been established but has not yet made recommendations. Subject teachers are investigating uses of software to support teaching and learning but most subjects do not have sufficient access to ICT. There are a small number of computers in the school library for use both during and outside of lessons, and a new computer room is also available; these are in heavy demand by pupils for research and to present their work.

Sixth form

Standards in the sixth form are above national averages.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The 2004 results in A-level GCSE examinations were around the national average, which is an improvement on 2003, when they were below it.
- Boys did significantly better than girls.

- A relatively small proportion of students stay on to the sixth form, all taking academic courses.
- The standards seen in classes are above average, and the achievement of the present students is good.
- Some students take only two examinations, which reduces their overall points score, and there are no alternative qualifications offered for them.

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	95.5 (99.0)	92.3 (92.3)
Percentage of entries gaining A-B grades	34.1 (32.8)	36.2 (35.6)
Average point score per pupil	258.8 (210.9)	265.2 (258.2)

12. The results in A-level GCSE examinations have varied over the past three years. In 2004 they were around the national average. The overall points score was an improvement on 2003, when they were below the national average. However the percentage of pass grades fell. The boys did significantly better than the girls in 2004, although the small numbers make statistical comparisons difficult. Some girls dropped out just before the examination, which affected the overall course completion rate, although this remained satisfactory. Results were above the national average in religious education, art and design, sports studies and drama, but below it in biology, and computing.
13. Only about one third of students, a relatively small proportion, stay on to the sixth form. A similar number continue with their studies after GCSEs elsewhere. All students are taking academic courses, leading to A- and AS level examinations. Their achievement in examinations is satisfactory, based on their progress from their GCSE, and almost all go on to higher education. Some students take only two examinations, which reduces their overall points score, and there are no alternative qualifications, vocational or otherwise, offered for them.
14. Standards seen during the inspection in the subjects inspected are well above expectations in design and technology and drama, and are above them in English, mathematics, chemistry, ICT, art and design, and religious education (RE) as a subject. There are no below average standards apart from the lack of provision for RE to those not taking the examination. Achievement was at least good in all subjects, and in ICT, design and technology and drama it was very good. Standards in literacy, numeracy and the use of ICT are good.
15. There has been an improvement in standards since the last inspection, when results were below national averages.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils' attitudes towards their learning and life in the school are very good. Attitudes are good in Years 7 to 9 and very good in Years 10 to 11. Among students in the sixth form they are very good. The behaviour of pupils as observed in lessons is good; among students in the sixth form it is very good. Behaviour in and around the school is good. Attendance levels in the school are satisfactory; in the sixth form they are good. Punctuality throughout the school at the beginning of sessions and lessons is satisfactory. Relationships between

fellow students and between students and staff are very good. Overall, this aspect has retained the good standards noted in the last report.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The very good attitudes shown by pupils towards learning and the school.
- The good behaviour of pupils in lessons and around the school.
- The very good relationships throughout the school.
- The very good attitudes and behaviour of students in the sixth form.
- The school regularly asks pupils and students about their views and attitudes.

Commentary

16. Many parents say that their children enjoy school life and that the school is working hard to enable them to develop as mature young people. Evidence from inspection supports these positive views. Some parents and indeed some pupils say that behaviour is not good enough. Evidence from inspection, including discussion with pupils and students, shows that taken overall behaviour in lessons is good in the lower school and very good in the upper school and the sixth form. Pupils and students are however very clear as to what the impact of inappropriate behaviour is when it occurs. They do not however think that overall it has a major detrimental affect on their learning. The school asks pupils and students their views, analyses the results and takes action. Their views on behaviour are becoming more positive.
17. Inspection evidence shows a small number of lessons in the school where attitudes and behaviour are judged to be unsatisfactory; when this occurs it is usually linked to teaching which does not match the work set to the needs of the pupils sufficiently well. There are however also a number of lessons where, whilst behaviour is judged as satisfactory overall, both time and opportunity is sometimes lost because of inappropriate behaviour amongst small numbers of pupils which is not well managed by teachers. Here also it is often the case that work has not been sufficiently closely matched to all pupils' needs, and several of these situations are in the lower ability bands. As a result pupils do not sustain interest and concentration in their work. Group sizes are much smaller, which makes the opportunities to motivate pupils more manageable.
18. Some parents and pupils say that behaviour in and around the school is not good enough. Evidence from inspection shows that behaviour is good overall, and therefore these views are not supported by the inspectors. There are occasional problems, and these can be very upsetting for those involved. There is, however, no pattern of disruptive behaviour, and the school is doing what it can to deal with issues quickly and effectively. The school has an open school policy; this means that many pupils and students, with permission, leave the site at lunchtime. Discussions with pupils and students show very clearly that this is in the main because of the lack of social areas and facilities for them to use and, in their view, the restricted dining facilities on site. Evidence obtained during inspection including discussions with pupils and students show that behaviour of pupils and students immediately outside the site, particularly at lunchtimes, is usually good, but the movement into town of several hundred pupils at the same time can seem intimidating.
19. Relationships throughout the school both between pupils and students and with staff are very good. Staff, led by the notable example of the headteacher and her senior

staff, know them well and work very hard on their behalf. Evidence of this was seen not only in lessons but in and around the school generally. An example of this was seen in a Year 8 assembly where the responsible member of staff took the greatest care over the organization and presentation of a range of matters including the school's response to Red Nose Day. Particularly notable was the sensitive linking and handling of the tragic death of a fellow pupil recently to supporting and caring for others. Pupils' responses were thoughtful and very moving. Many other examples were seen from both teaching and support staff. It was quite clear from discussions with pupils and students that this approach was very much the norm of life in the school.

20. Many parents and pupils and students raised concerns about the issue of bullying, and some parents were clearly upset by issues with their child. The school has very clear policies and procedures in this area. Inspection evidence shows that the school is actively tackling these issues where they arise. The development of its rewards and sanctions policy is at the forefront of this response. Pupils and students say that the situation is now improving and that a number of initiatives are helping with this. A good example is that the recently developed school council has as one of its first initiatives developed a support mechanism, "FAB", whereby trained mentors are available to respond to their fellow pupils' concerns. This has included a system where pupils can e-mail concerns and receive initial advice and support. Discussions with those actively involved show that there is a determination to make this work. The headteacher and other senior staff have played a key leadership role in this development. Pupils are aware of the scheme and feel confident in it. During inspection no incidents of bullying or racial abuse were seen; indeed the relationships between pupils of all backgrounds and sexes were very good.
21. Provision for pupils' and students' spiritual development is satisfactory. They are offered opportunities to reflect upon their learning in lessons and during registration periods and assemblies when thoughts for the day or week are considered.
22. The provision for their moral development is good. They are taught the difference between right and wrong. Many recognize how their behaviour impacts on others and an outcome of this is the good relationships seen. Opportunities are provided for them to take responsibility; these have been enhanced by the development of the school council. Evidence is that they welcome these developing roles and are approaching them in a serious and mature manner.
23. Social education is good. There are many examples in lessons of pupils and students working well together in pairs or small groups to consider or respond to the teachers' questioning. An example was seen in a Year 9 life-skills class where pupils were considering democracy and in particular reflecting upon the war in Iraq. The somewhat limited facilities at break and lunchtime noted elsewhere do mean that opportunities for social interaction are restricted. It is therefore notable that pupils and students do nevertheless display good social skills, both amongst themselves and in relation to adults and show awareness of the feelings of others.
24. The provision for cultural education is satisfactory. The provision for multicultural education is also satisfactory. They have opportunities to appreciate their own culture, for example through work seen in drama, art and design and geography, and in other cultures through life-skills education. A good example of this multicultural dimension was seen in a Year 8 geography lesson where pupils were learning about the impact

of the damming of the Yangtze River in China and its impact on the lives of people living there. The opportunities provided for particularly the older pupils to study and participate in plays and productions are also very good and are much enjoyed by pupils and students who gain much from them.

25. Opportunities for pupils to take responsibility are provided, pupils respond very well to these when offered and they and the school gain much from them. In relation to taking responsibility for their own learning, particularly in lessons, too few opportunities are planned for or provided currently.

Attendance

26. Levels of attendance are satisfactory, they are broadly in line with those seen in similar schools. Levels of unauthorized absence are also broadly similar to those seen in similar schools. The current levels show some decline since the last report. The school has however acted positively to this change, for example by responding quickly to absence by contacting parents on the first day of absence. They are also actively promoting the need for good attendance with pupils and students. Parents are reminded of the need for high levels of attendance on a regular basis. The school regularly analyses attendance data and corresponds in any case causing concern with external agencies including the Education Welfare Officer. The school’s system of pastoral care plays a crucial role in both promoting and monitoring attendance levels. Punctuality at the beginning of sessions and lessons is satisfactory.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	7.1	School data	1.2
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.

27. The schools’ level of exclusions is below those usually seen, but there is a disproportionate number of pupils from a Caribbean background who are excluded. Where exclusion is used it is in support of the schools’ policy of rewards and sanctions. Appropriate procedures are followed where exclusion is used including the appropriate rights for parents.

Ethnic background of pupils

Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No. of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	931	12	1
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	15	2	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	37	9	0
White – Irish	3	0	0
White – any other White background	32	0	0
Mixed – White and black African	1	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	4	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	9	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Indian	60	0	0
Asian or British Asian – Pakistani	10	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	16	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other	3	0	0
Black or Black British – African	9	0	0
Black or Black British – other	12	0	0
Chinese	2	0	0
Any other	10	0	0
Preferred not to say	3	0	0
No information	11	0	0

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

The sixth form

28. The students who join the sixth form have very positive attitudes and show considerable interest for and keenness to do well in their studies. They are articulate, polite and enthusiastic young people who have a real commitment to the school. They respond well to the support they get, and have a mature approach to study, working hard to achieve their examination grades.
29. They say that recent developments in the school are having a beneficial effect upon their learning and development. They enjoy taking responsibility when offered the opportunity as for example in acting as mentors for the youngest pupils when they join the school and by their participation in both the school council and the recently developed anti-bullying strategy. Their attendance is good and they are punctual to lessons, using private study effectively.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are **good**. Assessment is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers have an expert knowledge of their subject and communicate this to the pupils.
- The proportion of teaching judged as good has increased greatly since the last inspection.
- Examination and test results are reviewed in detail.
- The data produced is not regularly used effectively to support pupils' learning and progress.
- Lesson plans developed from the National Key Stage 3 Strategy are having a positive effect where they are used.

Commentary

30. The quality of teaching shows an improvement from the position at the time of the previous inspection in 1999. The proportion of lessons characterised by very good or excellent teaching is better, but the proportion of unsatisfactory teaching has increased slightly. The biggest area of improvement has been in the conversion of satisfactory teaching to good teaching. Teaching is now good or better in nearly three quarters of lessons. The statistics on students' learning closely followed these figures. Most classes are taught in ability bands; often the same group is together all week apart from pastoral lessons. The range of ability within each class is therefore narrower than usual, but can still be significant, so different materials for some pupils are used in the best lessons. The school has made the improvement of learning and teaching one of its key issues to drive up standards.
31. The management of pupils has improved since the last inspection, but aspects of the marking and assessment of their work and the wider use of information and communication technology to support their learning are still weak. The impact of the specialist college on teaching is not yet evident in mathematics or ICT subjects. The improvement in the quality of teaching is having a positive impact on pupils' achievement.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection of 140 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
3 (2%)	36 (23%)	76 (48%)	33 (21%)	11 (7%)	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.

32. The proportion of good and better lessons was higher in Years 9 and 11 than in Years 7, 8 and 10. The main strengths of the teaching in these lessons include:
- expert knowledge of the subject by the teacher;
 - activities are designed to ensure that all pupils, whatever their levels of attainment within a class, can make good progress and achieve well;
 - pupils are given clear explanations, plenty of guidance when needed and clear demonstrations;
 - all pupils are encouraged to take a full part;
 - pupils are encouraged to co-operate in the lesson, often helping each other to improve their performance;
 - lessons are enriched by the use of extra resources such as ICT, library resources, or fieldwork activities;
 - homework is designed to extend the work done in class and forms an important part of the next lesson; and
 - work is carefully evaluated to inform what to do next.
33. Some of the learning approaches recommended by the National Key Stage 3 Strategy are beginning to have a positive effect, though not evenly across all subjects. These recently introduced approaches include lively starter activities to remind students of what they have

already learned and a session at the end to sum up what has been achieved. Such approaches are also being used by some teachers in Years 10 to 13. Students with special educational needs are supported well by teachers and teaching assistants, and so make good progress in their learning, but those whose first language is not English are sometimes struggling to understand what to do.

34. In lessons where the teaching is satisfactory rather than good, most students make adequate progress but at least some of them are not given enough opportunity to do better than this. The main reasons for this are:
- the pace of lessons is too slow to engage all pupils fully, leading to reduced productivity;
 - teaching styles did not match the needs of all the pupils to a sufficient degree;
 - different materials are not provided for pupils with different needs;
 - pupils are not given enough chances to think and work independently, mainly because the teacher did too much for them;
 - small numbers of unco-operative pupils demanded a great deal of attention from the teacher, so slowing down the progress made by others; and
 - too few visual resources were available, and sometimes there was a heavy reliance on worksheets.
35. Teaching was unsatisfactory in 11 lessons in Years 7 to 9. The main reasons for this were non-specialist or inexperienced teachers, a lack of urgency, the purpose of the lesson not properly understood by all pupils, too much off-task conversation and the teacher speaking for too long. No poor teaching was seen.
36. The quality of the marking of pupils' work is mostly satisfactory, with pockets of good practice. Whilst most work is corrected by teachers and much of it is given a mark or grade, not all of the school's intentions are being consistently fulfilled. The best marking does provide pupils with a clear view of how to progress further but there are also plenty of cases where teachers respond mainly with comments on effort and attitude. Many teachers do not emphasise with sufficient precision the next steps that pupils should take in order to improve their work further.
37. Assessment is satisfactory and some elements are done very well. However, the main weakness is that pupils are not given adequate guidance about how to improve their work. One area of strength is the way in which tests and examination results are analysed statistically. Recently this work has been usefully complemented by the use of "value-added" data that links pupils' performance to predicted grades based in their performance in previous tests. All subject leaders draw up improvement plans based on the evaluation of past results. This is starting to help the pupils to identify their strengths and weaknesses. Another area of strength is the way in which the individual learning requirements of pupils with special educational needs are assessed and met.
38. The ways in which pupils' current progress is quantified and tracked have greatly improved in recent months. Most teachers now have clear information about the level that each of their pupils is working at in Years 7 to 9 and the GCSE grade that they are expected to reach in Years 10 and 11. Predicted levels and grades are now being defined with increasing accuracy. Pupils are made aware of their targets and of their actual level or grade. However, in many subjects, pupils are not given enough information and advice about the skills and concepts needed to move from their current level to their target level. Reports and progress statements tend to contain written targets that are more related to attitude and commitment than to skills and concepts. Pupils following GCSE courses generally had a much clearer understanding of the grade they could reach and how to get there.
39. The school is at the early stages of using and analysing data in relation to ethnic groupings to identify how inclusive it is. The very good pupil questionnaires were analysed by ethnic groupings last year and this year, and some basic data was provided to departments for 2004 to give indication of the achievement of ethnic

minority pupils. The school has also started to monitor pupils' achievement by teaching groups to identify underachievement or above average progress.

40. Pupils with special educational needs are well taught. They achieve very well when teachers take account of their individual needs, and adapt approaches to meet them. Learning support assistants make a strong contribution by encouraging the development of individual skills. In very good lessons, there are very good relationships between staff and pupils, pupils' views are valued and all are encouraged to contribute. Teachers have high expectations of pupils in terms of their behaviour and their work.
41. Teaching and support for pupils whose first language is not English are unsatisfactory. There is no external support to help the school determine whether pupils have special educational needs or language problems. This means that pupils can struggle and have difficulties with responding appropriately in lessons. Teachers are not aware of their needs or how they can be helped.

The sixth form

Teaching and learning are **good**. Assessment is **satisfactory**.

42. The quality of teaching was very good or excellent in nearly a half of the lessons seen and good or better in almost all the others seen. No unsatisfactory lessons were seen. Many of the strengths of teaching and learning in the main school are found equally in the sixth form. These include:
 - teachers' high levels of expertise and specialist knowledge;
 - high levels of student involvement, thanks to teachers building up their confidence and commitment;
 - clear explanations followed by lively discussions and plenary sessions that summarise and reinforce learning; and
 - teachers pushing students to achieve to a higher level.
43. In a few lessons the teachers directed the students work too closely, and there was insufficient scope for students to become involved.
44. Students' essays, assignments and tests are marked regularly and students are frequently given personal reviews of their performance, together with advice on how to improve. The tutors work closely with individuals, but the analysis of the progress of the sixth form overall is not well developed. Trends, such as the below average standards last year, are not looked at in depth to identify why individuals, groups or subjects did better or worse than others. The data was not available in the past, but is now, but is not yet used effectively to improve teaching and standards.

The curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is **good**. It meets statutory requirements, with the exception of provision for non-examination RE in the sixth form, and is enriched by a good range of extra-curricular activities. The school has embarked successfully on developing the curriculum to provide greater balance and breadth in Years 7, 8 and 9 and an increased variety of courses in Years 10, including the introduction of more vocational routes. Accommodation and resources are satisfactory, but the use of ICT remains unsatisfactory. The school has recently attained specialist status for mathematics and computing, but this is not yet fully reflected in the curriculum.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and support staff match the needs of the curriculum well.
- Provision for pupils with SEN is good.
- The curriculum is generally inclusive, providing opportunity for most pupils and students, although those whose first language is not English do not have satisfactory support.
- ICT is not used enough to support learning across the whole curriculum.
- The limited options for Year 11 pupils have been extended in Year 10 so that much greater choice is available.
- Participation in the arts is well promoted, with drama a leading feature.
- The library facilities and accommodation are a good feature of the school.

Commentary

45. The curriculum in Years 7 to 9 includes all National Curriculum subjects and religious education (RE), and overall meets statutory requirements. There is good breadth and balance. Pupils are put into ability bands early in their first year, and remain in these for most subjects, apart from pastoral lessons. Through the banding system all pupils are given appropriately differentiated access to all areas of learning, although there are limitations for some pupils to study some elements of the programmes of study for music, modern foreign languages and art and design. In Years 10 and 11, all statutory requirements are met and a recently introduced pattern of four different pathways for pupils to choose provides an increasing range of programmes to cater for different needs and aptitudes, including some limited vocational options.
46. The school provides well for pupils with special educational needs (SEN). Requirements are met for pupils with formal statements, and subject departments adapt their programmes, with guidance from SEN specialist staff. In Years 7, 8 and 9 these pupils follow a study skills course which helps to develop basic academic and social skills. There are opportunities for alternative accredited courses for older pupils, although these are limited in scope.
47. The curriculum is well managed and organised. The fundamental banding pattern is supported by sufficient flexibility to ensure that it does not prevent access to all important areas of learning and experience as pupils move up through the school. Its impact and consequences are monitored and evaluated, with changes made and initiatives taken to develop the curriculum, for example the change of the school week from 20 to 25 periods is now established and has improved breadth and balance; in Year 10 the introduction of "4 routes to success" has increased opportunity for vocational study and caters more effectively for the increasingly diverse needs of pupils in the school.
48. The curriculum prepares pupils and students adequately for subsequent stages of education or employment. Courses and opportunities are satisfactory and careers education meets requirements. The support and guidance for all pupils in respect of their future routes are developing, but are not fully in place yet. The views and aspirations of pupils, students and parents are increasingly being taken into account. Developments of vocational education and work-related learning are at an early stage; provision is only satisfactory currently, but the school not only has plans but also the clear capacity to improve this aspect.
49. Provision for personal, social and health education is broadly effective with full coverage of all elements, including citizenship and careers. Sex and relationships education is satisfactory, and there is adequate attention to learning about the issues of drug and alcohol abuse. The innovative life-skills course for all pupils in all years is making a positive contribution to their learning. This programme is well planned, led and managed with good resources and good support available for staff, but it is a course which is still very much at an early stage of development. Opportunities for training all staff have been too limited. It is taught, unusually for the school, in full mixed-ability groups and processes are not properly in place yet for effectively monitoring and developing the teaching and learning specifically within this area.

Citizenship provision is satisfactory overall; it is delivered within the life-skills programme, but learning is not adequately assessed and the subject does not feature prominently in other subject programmes across the curriculum.

50. Overall the curriculum is inclusive. There is good access to all aspects of the curriculum and good opportunities. For example all students have the opportunity to take dance in physical education (PE) and all pupils follow a short course GCSE in religious education. There are however, some restricted opportunities in music, both for instrumental tuition and popular music, and for lower attaining pupils in modern foreign languages. Opportunities for those whose first language is not English are limited by the poor provision for them.
51. The school has not had good links with the community in the past; it now makes effective but only relatively limited use of outside resources, for example through visits and by bringing in external speakers and tutors. The school acknowledges the need to continue developing further its educational links with local business, commerce and enterprise.
52. Provision of work-related learning (WRL) is satisfactory, and the school has the capacity and will to build on its early stages of development. Statutory elements feature within the life-skills programme, and there is an established, appropriate scheme for the provision of two-week work experience for all students in Year 11. Through the alternative curriculum for some pupils in Years 10 and 11 there are good opportunities for WRL. The introduction of a vocational GCSE course in leisure and tourism has increased opportunities, but restrictions on time and resource have so far meant an inadequate development of outside links.
53. The development of skills in literacy and numeracy through and across the whole curriculum in the main school is good. There are effective cross-curricular staff working parties which support and promote progress in these areas. By contrast, the use of ICT to support learning across all subjects remains unsatisfactory.
54. Good drama provision enhances the breadth of pupils' experiences throughout the school, and particularly so in the sixth form. This is complemented by a good range and variety of extra-curricular opportunities, particularly for sport and the arts, building on good links with the community and other agencies.
55. The school's recently approved specialist status for mathematics and computing is leading to further adjustments to the curriculum for all pupils and students. Plans for development of resources and accommodation have been set in motion. At the time of inspection there was no evidence of any discernible impact yet, but the school is very confident that it can now begin to make good progress in developing its chosen specialisms.
56. Curriculum liaison with primary schools has been inconsistent in quality and impact in the past. It is now satisfactory having improved through a series of recent initiatives, partly resulting from the specialist school plans. This is improving the smoothness of pupils' transition from primary school. There is increasing collaboration and liaison with other 14-19 providers locally, within frameworks being developed with the local Learning and Skills Council (LSC) and the local 14-19 forum; the impact of this on the school's own curriculum is as yet not discernible, since these initiatives are at a relatively early stage.
57. There is an appropriate range and quality of good teaching and support staff which match the needs of the planned curriculum. This makes an important positive contribution to the achievement overall of standards in the school. Recent retirements and promotions have enabled the school to start to restructure the staffing.
58. Accommodation overall is satisfactory to enable effective delivery of the curriculum. Most subject departments are able to teach in suitable specialist rooms and areas, but there are

some minor deficiencies in some learning areas, for example: occasionally cramped PE changing facilities; shortage of storage space in art and design; poor acoustics and physical access in some rooms; and some inadequacy in music facilities. The school has appropriate plans to refurbish and address a number of accommodation issues, including the development of a new inclusion centre. The good school library is a strength, and the modern sports hall is a good feature. Dining and social areas, however, are relatively restricted and this has a negative effect on the school's ambitions to promote its ethos.

59. Resources are generally sufficient to deliver the curriculum, with the important exception that access to ICT facilities remains unsatisfactory and continues to inhibit the development of some aspects of teaching and learning. This was the case at the time of the last inspection. The finances available through the specialist status have been thought through in detail to improve provision across the school.

The sixth form

60. The curriculum provision in the sixth form is satisfactory. A wide range of specialist academic courses are offered and they are well resourced at advanced and AS level GCE. The focus of the sixth form is university entry. The school does not provide vocational courses, but liaises with the local further education college and other schools to offer courses for the full range of students. Over 75 per cent of pupils in Year 11 continue with their studies after 16, but only about half of these at the school. Some students only study two subjects in Year 13, and there are no alternatives for them to take.
61. The curriculum is devised in consultation with students and parents, and courses have clear criteria on which they are offered. The staffing is very well matched to the curriculum provided, and the accommodation is good. Provision for religious education for all students in the sixth form is unsatisfactory, not enough time is provided to meet statutory requirements, although provision for those on the examination course is good. There is a very good and varied enrichment programme for all students, which is taken advantage of by the majority of students.

Care, guidance and support

Overall, the care, guidance and support given to pupils and students is good. The school has good health and safety procedures, both in the curriculum and in the life of the school in its day-to-day operation. The advice, guidance and support offered to pupils and students on both a formal and informal basis is good. The views of pupils and students are now valued. The recent establishment of the school council is appreciated by pupils and students and it is beginning to contribute to the life of the school. The school has maintained the high standards noted in the last report in this area of its work.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school's arrangements to monitor and promote pupils' and students' personal development are good.
- The school's good arrangements to promote high levels of attendance.
- The school's good arrangements for health and safety.
- The recently introduced school council and regular questionnaire to pupils are positive moves.

Commentary

62. The school cares well for its pupils and students and helps them to make good progress. Pupils and students say that staff are helpful and supportive. The school's rewards and sanctions policy and its promotion of the need for high levels of attendance are recognized by pupils and students as beginning to improve their lives in school. The very good relationships seen between staff, pupils and students are clear evidence of the views expressed by both parents and pupils that the school staff have their best interests at heart.
63. Arrangements for matters such as health and safety and routines such as fire safety checks are handled well. The school now has appropriate arrangements in place for child protection, based on advice from the local education authority. A deputy headteacher is the nominated person, and has received appropriate training. Staff are aware of the school's procedures. Experience of the operation of these on a day-to-day basis shows them to be working well. Similarly the school has good arrangements in place for such matters as first aid and pupils and students who are unwell during the school day receive good levels of care and attention. Very good links are established with the school nurse who provides routine medical advice and procedures as well as support within aspects of the curriculum. There is a scheme, "Hatton Help", established to give confidential advice and support as required to pupils, which is proving beneficial.
64. The recently developed school council is beginning to provide pupils and students with a way of expressing their views on their life in school. Evidence shows clearly that they appreciate this opportunity and a number of initiatives already taken have proved successful, as for example in the establishment of a scheme to counter bullying in the school.
65. Pupils and students have access to advice and guidance from early in their school life through the Connexions Service in relation to their future education and careers path. Advice is also available from staff for those pupils who are able to take advantage of the school's sixth form programme. The academic nature of this means, however, that the majority of pupils leave at the end of Year 11 to further their education elsewhere. Arrangements for pupils to have exposure to the world of commerce and business are satisfactory. There are schemes such as work experience and Young Enterprise and individual mentoring schemes with experienced adults from the world of work. However overall, such opportunities are too few. Inspection evidence shows clearly the value of such schemes for those youngsters currently involved.

Sixth form

66. Students in the sixth form have access to good advice and guidance from the head of sixth form and tutors which helps them through not only their day-to-day work but also in relation to such matters as university and college placements. The head of the sixth form completes all university application forms in consultation with tutors and students. The focus for the sixth form is university entrance, which enables the support and guidance to be concentrated on specific ends, and in this they are good.
67. The mature and responsible attitudes to work and behaviour also confirm the very good relationships between staff and students seen. The tutors are responsible for academic monitoring as well as pastoral support; this is very effective and is a good model for the rest of the school. There is good involvement of students through seeking and acting on their views, and they play a strong role in school life.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The partnership between the school and parents and careers is satisfactory. The written communication with parents has some good features, although reports need some improvement. The Home School Association provides good support to learning and development. Links with the community are satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good administrative links have been established with local primary schools which lead to a smooth transition for pupils to secondary education.
- The supportive work of the Home School Association has positive effect.
- Good links with colleges and others for those in the sixth form.
- Reports on pupils' progress do not give parents a clear picture of what their child can do or what progress they are making.

Commentary

68. The school's written communication with parents is satisfactory, and has some good features, for example its prospectus and the annual written report by governors to parents. They contain much useful information about the school and its organization and are well written, accessible and interesting. The headteacher has improved the newsletters for parents. These give much useful information about everyday life in the school, recording and applauding successes as well as noting day-to-day organizational issues. The school now has a website which contains a useful range of practical information for parents and others. The school have sought the views of parents on a range of issues and is currently responding to these.
69. The vast majority of parents say that the school has good arrangements for the transfer of pupils from primary schools. They also say that they feel comfortable about approaching the school about any issues arising. Inspection evidence means that inspectors support these positive views. Parents also say clearly that pupils enjoy school and make good progress. Again inspection evidence, particularly from discussions with pupils and students, supports these views.
70. The school benefits from the active support of the Home School Association. The group works very hard to provide funds in support of pupils' learning development, as for example in the provision of funds to support extra curricular activities, donations to enable books to be purchased for the library and a considerable donation towards the school's application for specialist college status. The association has also committed itself to considerable financial support for the school's planned programme of refurbishment. The school recognises the value of that support.
71. The annual written reports to parents do not give any clear sense of what the pupil now knows and can do when compared to the last report. The reports rely on a series of tick boxes which are not obviously linked to any national comparisons and where written comments are added by staff there is inconsistency in quality and usefulness of the information for parents. Opportunities for parents to meet with staff on a formal basis are good; in addition the school encourages parents to make contact on an informal basis if there are any concerns. Many do this, however many parents still say clearly that they do not feel that they are kept well informed about their children's

progress. They also say that they do not feel that they have sufficient advice as to how they can help their children at home. Inspection evidence supports parents' views on these matters. Parents of pupils with special education needs receive very good support. Pupils and parents are encouraged to participate actively in the reviews of progress as required. Parents are also encouraged to play an active role in pupils' learning.

72. The school's links with the wider community, whilst having some notable features, are overall limited and only satisfactory. The links recently developed with primary schools, which lead to enhanced sporting activities for them, are helpful, as are the opportunities for some youngsters to be involved in the Young Enterprise scheme and to receive individual mentoring from experienced trained adults about their future careers. Overall however there are too few of these for the majority of pupils.
73. Parents of prospective students in the sixth form have access to good advice about the range of courses offered, both in the school and elsewhere, as well what it can offer to young people to help them develop as young adults. The support and advice offered by staff to parents and students in the sixth form in making contact with the next stage of learning is also good and enables students to make informed choices about their applications for higher education. Links with industry, local commerce and business are now improving after a long period when these opportunities were missed.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The leadership of the school by the headteacher is **very good**. The leadership by other key staff is **good**. Governance is **good**. The schools' management is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The leadership of the headteacher is very good. She has a clear vision, sense of purpose and high aspirations for the school.
- Many of the initiatives introduced are recent, and their implementation is not consistent across all areas.
- Leadership of other key staff across the school is substantially good and in some cases very good.
- Governors effectively influence and contribute to the work of the school and have a clear understanding of its strengths and weaknesses.
- Management systems, structures, procedures, and policies have undergone significant changes and they are not as yet fully or consistently embedded in all areas of the school.

Commentary

74. The leadership of the headteacher is very good. She is a powerful and driving force in moving the school forward. She has introduced significant change to school structures, policies, procedures, roles and systems since she was appointed. There is a strong commitment to raising standards across a range of indicators, securing high levels of achievement, ensuring high quality guidance for pupils, promoting high quality learning and teaching and developing a curriculum that enables achievement at all levels. These commitments are reflected in the headteacher's clear vision for the school. Her drive for improvement is based on rigorous self-evaluation. This

underpins increasingly linked financial management, performance management and professional development systems. Many of the initiatives introduced are recent, and their implementation is not consistent across all areas. They are not, as yet, embedded into all teachers' ways of working.

75. Staff are aware of the direction in which the school is being led and increasingly committed to this vision. These are clear whole school priorities and policies for improvement and these now inform planning and procedures in all key aspects and areas of the school. The headteacher is committed to developing the effectiveness of senior and middle managers and they are increasingly empowered to take greater leadership responsibilities across the school. They are significantly involved in the school's self-evaluation processes and improvement planning. Identified priority agendas are on track, and substantial progress has been made in relation to these and other issues identified in the last inspection report in the period since the headteacher took up her appointment. Under her leadership the school clearly demonstrates a capacity to improve further and build on this progress to secure even higher standards and quality.
76. Leadership in general across the school is good, and in some cases very good. In no area is it deemed unsatisfactory though in the course of the inspection there was some confusion over perceived responsibility for English as an additional language (EAL), and the number of pupils in that category.
77. The governance of the school is good. The governors are demonstrably proud of the school and the progress it is making. They effectively demonstrate their role as a critical friend of the headteacher. They significantly influence the work of the school and have a clear grasp of its strengths and weaknesses. They share the strategic aspiration and focus of the headteacher in relation to high standards and quality. They have made certain difficult decisions, for example in reviewing the specialist status for mathematics and computing. They backed the headteacher's view that there should be a fundamental change in the way additional funding should be deployed to improve the overall accommodation of the school.
78. There are well organised and effective committees. Governors have increasing awareness of departmental performance through their effective links with areas of the school. Governors have access to effective training and appropriate information to ensure they are aware of new developments and equipped to perform their strategic role. They ensure the school complies with its statutory responsibilities with the exception of that relating to the provision of religious education in the sixth form. Plans and a timetable for implementation of necessary requirements in this area have been identified. Governors are effective in their financial oversight of the school. They have a good understanding of and apply the principles of best value. Budget decisions are informed by identified improvement priorities. The school gives good value for money.

Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	3,732,648
Total expenditure	3,630,597
Expenditure per pupil	3,124

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	520,592
Balance carried forward to the next year	622,643

79. Overall the management of the school is at least satisfactory with some good features. Financial management, the management of staff induction and the school's contribution to initial teacher training are good. The management of curricular areas is never less than satisfactory, often good and in science and special educational needs it is very good. The school functions effectively on a day-to-day basis. There are clear procedures. Key roles and responsibilities are understood and reinforced by increasing delegation. Management systems, policies and processes have undergone significant changes. Though all areas of the school are now conforming to the school's self-evaluation processes and key policies and are having access to an increasing range of performance data, the subsequent outcomes and impact are not yet consistent. Some curriculum managers, for example, are still not making the best use of performance data to inform and bring about improvement or track pupil progress. The school has recognised that current performance management arrangements have insufficiently informed professional development, and agendas are in hand to address this.
80. The SEN department is very well led and efficiently organised by a highly committed co-ordinator (SENCO). Roles and responsibilities are clearly defined and there are effective channels of communication. Statutory requirements are fully met and there are good links with parents. There are useful procedures for monitoring performance of staff with good opportunities for professional development. There are, as yet, insufficient procedures to analyse data in order to demonstrate the achievement of the pupils. Self-evaluation of provision for SEN pupils now takes place regularly but is not as yet totally embedded. There is a designated governor for SEN, and the governors' annual report for parents provides a useful description of the arrangements to support SEN pupils, but it does not include any information about the effectiveness of the provision.
81. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. In the period since the current headteacher took up her appointment the school has undergone significant procedural and cultural changes. In the process it has substantially addressed those factors relating to leadership and management that at the time of the last inspection were identified as having a negative impact on the work of the school. The school is well placed to secure further improvements in relation to the good standards and quality it already delivers.

Leadership and management in the sixth form

82. Leadership and management in the sixth form are both **satisfactory**. Pastoral management of the sixth form is good. The monitoring of students' academic progress and pastoral mentoring are central to the role of the tutors and well established. This has provided a positive model to inform similar developments elsewhere in the school. The management of the curriculum enables a wide range of GCSE A- and AS level courses to be offered. The sixth form is almost exclusively focused on university entrance. Vocational opportunities and developments in relation to the sixth form are currently limited, although life skills programmes and links with colleges and higher education continue to be developed.
83. Day-to-day management and administration of the sixth form are good and supported by a handbook for students. Monitoring of teaching and use of data to predict examination performance and establish targets are satisfactory. The potential

contribution of a review of examination results to help to improve performance and maximise the achievement of individuals is not as yet fully realised. Results, given the small numbers, can be significantly affected by the performance of individuals or small groups of students year on year, and there is not enough analysis of the reasons for success or failure.

84. Governors are aware of the strengths, weaknesses and current issues relating to the sixth form. They are active in their role as critical friends. They are aware of their statutory duty to provide for the teaching of religious education in the sixth form, and necessary plans have been identified together with a related timescale. Improvements since the last inspection have been satisfactory. The performance of sixth form students in 2004 showed improvement on the 1999 results, which were below the national average. The sixth form finances are appropriately managed and monitored. Overall the sixth form provides satisfactory value for money and is broadly cost-effective.

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 AND 4

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

English

Provision in English is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- National Curriculum test results at the age of 14 are well above the national average.
- The percentage of GCSE grades A*-C in both English and drama is significantly above the national average.
- Very good relationships and the high expectations of teachers are contributing significantly to pupils' progress and achievement.
- Assessment is not contributing fully to improving pupils' attainment and progress.
- The use of the National Key Stage 3 Strategy is having a positive impact on standards and achievement, but lesson objectives are not always used well to help learning.
- Pupils have limited opportunity to take responsibility for their own learning.
- There are not enough opportunities to use ICT.

Commentary

85. At the end of Year 9, pupils' results in the National Curriculum tests in 2004, were well above the average indicated by the unvalidated data available. These are similar to those at the time of the last inspection. Girls' results are higher than boys'. Compared with those in similar schools, test results are above average when pupils' prior attainment is taken into account.
86. In Years 10 and 11, standards in English have improved since the last inspection. The percentage of pupils achieving GCSE grades A* to C in 2004 was well above the national average. In English literature, the number of grades A* to C is similar to the national average, as it was when the school was last inspected. In both subjects, girls' results are better than boys', as is the situation nationally. The percentage of pupils achieving grades A* to C in drama is well above the national average, with a high proportion of pupils achieving the higher grades, A* and A. This is a significant improvement since the previous inspection. Girls again achieve better results than boys in drama.
87. Pupils' attainment in lessons observed during the inspection, in both Years 7 to 9 and Years 10 and 11, is above expectations. The difference between this and the examination results is explained by the fact that pupils are very well prepared for examinations by their teachers. Achievement in the lower ability groups is satisfactory, and in other groups their achievement in lessons is good. The achievement of ethnic minority pupils is similar to that of other pupils. However, the achievement of pupils with English as an additional language is below that expected. They have insufficient support with English to enable them to take a full part in lessons. Overall, there was no significant difference in the achievement of boys and girls.

88. Standards of speaking and listening have improved since the last inspection. In all years, most pupils are competent orally. They are able to respond to teachers' questions, express opinions and share ideas. They are able to collaborate effectively to extend their learning.
89. Pupils are using a wide range of writing forms and by the end of Year 9 they have an understanding of the concepts of purpose and audience. Most are able to effectively structure their writing and reach good standards of presentation. Some pupils in higher ability groups achieve very high standards of writing. An example of this was on display where, writing in the role of a tramp, the pupil produced a well structured piece of work in an appropriate and fluent style, with mature vocabulary and effective variation of sentence length.
90. In Years 10 and 11, many pupils have improved their fluency and extended their vocabulary. They are able to write at length with good standards of technical accuracy. Less competent writers in all years have difficulty in organising their writing and with spelling and punctuation.
91. In Years 7 to 11, the majority of pupils are competent readers. By the end of Year 9, they are able to discuss action and character in literary texts, and pupils with special educational needs can understand simple narrative structure. Pupils are developing their understanding of non-fiction texts. In Years 10 and 11, pupils are able to respond to characterisation and themes in literature. Pupils in higher ability groups are able to understand literary concepts such as metaphor, assonance, iambic and pentameter. They are able to use technical terms such as alliteration and enjambment. Strongly encouraged by their teachers, pupils are developing the ability to deduce the effects produced by literary techniques.
92. The quality of teaching and learning is good. It has improved since the last inspection. Teaching by some members of the department is of high quality. Successful teaching is characterised by very good subject knowledge and very effective planning and preparation. Teachers often have high expectations of pupils and skilfully manage their behaviour. There are very good relationships between teachers and pupils. These factors impact positively on pupils' learning. Pupils generally respond well, settling quickly to tasks and sustaining their concentration. The quality of homework is good, with tasks applying, consolidating and extending pupils' learning.
93. In the few instances where teaching is less successful, learning objectives are not sharply focused on what pupils were intended to learn; pupils are not sufficiently motivated and they work at a leisurely pace. In the one unsatisfactory lesson observed, pupils were very noisy and difficult to manage. Although pupils are given many opportunities to work in groups, lessons are sometimes very teacher directed and pupils not given responsibility for their own learning. In addition, they are rarely given the opportunity to use ICT to enhance their learning.
94. Teachers' ongoing assessment is satisfactory, but is not always making a sufficient contribution to the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement. Although marking is always positive and encouraging, it does not sufficiently identify pupils' specific strengths and weaknesses, informing them of what they need to do to improve.
95. The leadership of the department is good. Leaders are providing good role models. English teachers are working well together and there is a good team spirit. The aims

of the department are consistent with those of the school. Management is good. The department is well organised and some monitoring of teaching is taking place. However, the analysis and use of data is at a very early stage.

96. There has been good improvement since the last inspection. Results in GCSE examinations in English and in drama have risen. There has been improvement in teaching, particularly in GCSE classes, and in management. Standards of speaking and listening have risen and teachers are now effectively sharing successful approaches. However, liaison with primary schools has not improved sufficiently since the last inspection.

Drama

97. Drama is taught as a separate subject in all years. The provision is very good. The results in GCSE examinations are very good, and the department assesses pupils in Year 9, based on national criteria, as above average. The teaching is very good, with specialist teachers providing expert tuition. Pupils respond very well, they are enthusiastic and get involved in extra-curricular productions and events. The subject contributes very strongly to their cultural development, and enables pupils to develop as individuals. Extra classes in speaking and performing are provided for pupils in their tutorial time. This is a very positive development, and the pupils involved achieve very well, but they have to pay for the examinations themselves.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

98. Standards of literacy are good overall across all year groups, although in the lower ability classes, and amongst those pupils with English as a second language, there are several pupils whose standards are much lower. The school's implementation of the National Key Stage 3 Strategy has significantly contributed to these standards. A literacy co-ordinator is in place, a working party meets regularly and there is a whole-school literacy policy. A summer literacy school open to all pupils was held in 2004.
99. As a result of these developments, there has been a positive response amongst the staff and literacy is contributing significantly to pupils' standards and achievement in a number of subjects. This is particularly the case in science where the head of department is a member of the literacy working party, a departmental literacy policy has been devised, and some lessons have a literacy focus. Most departments are identifying key words for their subject. Writing frames are sometimes used to help pupils structure their writing. All departments are expected to have their own literacy policies, but not all have yet done so. Literacy is having a positive impact on standards in English, drama, geography, history, music and science.

Modern foreign languages

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good subject leadership and management contribute to raising pupils' achievement.
- Pupils' and students' attitudes to the subject are positive.
- ICT is not used enough to help effective learning and teaching in the subject.
- Assessment for learning in Years 7, 8 and 9 is unsatisfactory.

Commentary

100. French is studied by all pupils and German is also available to the higher attainers. At the age of 14 standards were reported as being below the national expectation in the 2004 teacher assessments. Standards of the pupils seen are actually above the national expectation across all abilities, and these teacher assessments are judged to be inaccurate.
101. GCSE standards are above the national average in both languages. In French two thirds of those entered attained an A*-C grade. The proportion of the school's students taking a full GCSE in modern foreign languages has been consistently much higher than the national average. In German, which only higher attaining pupils study, all 26 students, including ten boys, gained an A*-C grade. Results in both languages, and for both genders, compare significantly well with the results the students get in their other subjects. The difference between boys' and girls' attainment is less marked than is the case nationally.
102. Achievement is good overall. Pupils in most groups make at least the progress their prior attainment suggests ought to be expected and many do even better. Slower learners and pupils with special educational needs do particularly well.
103. Teaching is good in all years. The main strengths include:
- managing classes effectively, using positive feedback, lively classroom interactions, humour, encouragement and praise to create and sustain productive relationships,
 - good planning of the courses and lessons, linked to National Curriculum requirements and to identified specific learning objectives;
 - adjusting the expectation, styles and approach according to the needs of different groups and bands;
 - adapting materials, and creating good home-made resources to focus the teaching for particular groups and individuals;
 - using a variety and range of suitable activities and techniques; and
 - pupils responding well to the high expectations and challenge, actively using the language and thinking hard
104. The quality of teaching is weaker in Years 7, 8 and 9. Here the policy for use of the target language by teachers and pupils is not fully developed or consistently applied across all groups, and there is inadequate use of ICT to support subject learning.
105. Some aspects of assessment are unsatisfactory, although these are being tackled vigorously now, with specific initiatives and developments. In particular, the moderation and interpretation of National Curriculum levels is inaccurate. There is little assessment by pupils of their own work and that of others. There remains some inconsistency in the quality of marking and feedback despite some very good examples being seen, but not across the whole department. The use of performance data to inform lesson and course plans is weak, but there is some good practice with GCSE and sixth form classes. The quality of the reporting to parents is unsatisfactory.
106. Assessment is good in GCSE classes and the sixth form. The approach to target setting is good, in that targets relate to immediate curriculum and learning within the subject, so that pupils can make sense of them. Most pupils understand what is expected of them, what grades mean in practice, what represents good progress and the criteria which teachers use to judge quality. This all makes a difference, and pupils are developing the capacity to evaluate their own work.

107. The quality of learning is good. The vast majority of pupils in all years have positive attitudes to the subject, often showing enjoyment and good levels of effort. They behave well in class and are often keen to participate and respond. They work well together in small groups and pairs.
108. Leadership of the subject is good. A recently appointed new subject leader has done well in creating a collaborative team approach. There is a clear direction for the subject which is understood and supported by the whole team of teachers. There is good short-term setting of priorities for action, and effective support and leadership for other colleagues. Management of the subject is good. Professional development has appropriate direction and focus.
109. Accommodation is adequate with specialist dedicated rooms. Staffing expertise matches curriculum needs well in the main school and very well in the sixth form. Good foreign study visits take place and extra revision help and a homework club are offered; these contribute to raising the profile of languages and to raising standards. Resources are satisfactory.
110. Provision has improved satisfactorily since the last inspection, except in the use of ICT and assessment. The department has the capacity to sustain improvements. The subject has been and remains a successful one at the school.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Results are consistently above the national average.
- The teachers' high expectations and very good knowledge ensure that the subject is well taught, particularly in Years 7, 8 and 9.
- Pupils learn the subject well because of their positive attitudes, concentration and good work rate.
- Assessment is not used to plan the next steps in learning.
- Pupils do not have the opportunity to experience the use of ICT, or a range of teaching and learning styles.

Commentary

111. In the 2004 national tests at the end of Year 9, pupils' standards, measured by their average point scores were well above the national average as indicated by the unvalidated data available. The proportion of high attaining pupils is much higher than the national average. Girls' attainment was higher than boys' in 2004 but there have been no significant differences between the genders over the last four years.
112. In the 2004 GCSE examinations results were above the national average. Almost all of the pupils entered gained an A* to G grade. A higher proportion of girls than boys gained an A* to C grade but no girls attained an A* grade. Although above national averages, the 2004 results do show a decline both in Year 9 and Year 11 compared to the 2003 results. The average point scores of these pupils when they entered the school were slightly lower than in previous years.

113. Students' achievement is good overall in Years 7, 8 and 9, and is satisfactory in Years 10 and 11. Pupils in all years work productively individually but there are too few opportunities for them to discuss their work or to work collaboratively in order to make more rapid progress in their understanding. Pupils in Year 7 are confident with place value and can use a variety of strategies for written addition of numbers. By Year 9 they can find volumes of complex solid shapes and higher attaining pupils can represent numbers in standard form and use Pythagoras' theorem in problems. More than four in ten pupils who entered Year 7 below the national expectation in mathematics have made better than expected progress by the end of Year 9. In Years 10 and 11 higher attaining pupils can solve simultaneous equations by algebraic methods or by drawing graphs. However the work of middle and lower attaining pupils is sometimes incomplete.
114. Teaching and learning are good. Teachers' very good subject knowledge and clarity of explanations enable pupils to learn well. Higher attaining pupils particularly benefit from this approach but there is a lack of alternative learning styles offered to support middle and lower attainers. High expectations and an insistence on high standards provide a good learning environment. Pupils are well motivated and want to learn. Behaviour is very good even when there is little challenge in the work offered. However pupils are not questioned enough in whole class discussions to draw out ideas and explanations in order to ensure their understanding. All lessons are carefully structured but learning objectives are not always shared with the pupils and key teaching points are not emphasised or discussed at the ends of lessons in order to consolidate learning. There are good relationships between teachers and pupils and teachers make themselves available to support pupils out of lessons. Teaching assistants provide good support not only for targeted pupils but more generally around the class.
115. Leadership and management are both satisfactory. Teachers show a clear desire to raise the aspirations and standards of pupils, and departmental reviews recognise some of the strengths and weaknesses in the department, particularly in Years 10 and 11. The school has had a recent designation for specialism for mathematics and computing. An ambitious improvement plan has been produced and plans made to develop the subject further.
116. A start has been made on the use of data to track the progress of individual pupils and to raise their expectations by setting targets for Year 9 tests and GCSE examinations. However data analysis is not yet used to identify areas of the curriculum or groups of pupils that need support. Monitoring takes place but it is confined to the support of individual teachers and is not used to help develop whole departmental issues. There is a comprehensive set of policies in the department handbook. The marking policy does not indicate how to help pupils to recognise how to improve their work. Marking of pupils' work is brief and only sometimes includes corrections with encouraging or critical comment. ICT is not used enough in mathematics lessons to help them understand or consolidate their learning.
117. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory. Standards of attainment have been maintained and numeracy across the curriculum has been developed since the last inspection. However schemes of work still provide insufficient guidance to enable teachers to plan their work effectively and assessment arrangements do not allow teachers to review progress in particular areas of the curriculum.

Mathematics across the curriculum

118. The quality of pupils' use of mathematics across the curriculum is good. Pupils use their mathematical skills in a number of subjects, notably science and geography. In science, for example, pupils use their skills in acceleration, distance and time calculations in Year 10, and in ICT mental arithmetic was practised before putting formulae into a spreadsheet. A numeracy working party including teachers from most curriculum areas has produced a whole school policy which has been adopted by all departments and modified to suit their own curriculum. Form tutors use mathematical puzzles in form periods and numeracy activity days have been planned for Years 7 and 8.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are above average.
- Good teaching helps pupils to achieve well.
- The best lesson planning recognises the different ways pupils learn, and teachers use appropriate strategies to help all pupils.
- The department is very well led.
- Pupils know the level they are working at, but are not always clear how to improve their standards.
- Some teaching is unsatisfactory when it does not focus on pupils' learning.

Commentary

119. In 2004, results in the tests taken in Year 9 are well above the national average, indicated by the unvalidated data available. They are above the performance of pupils in other schools who had similar prior attainment. These results are better than those of 2002, but slightly lower than in 2003. Both boys and girls exceed the national figures for their gender. Standards evident in lessons and exercise books are currently above average. This is good achievement given that attainment on entry is average. The most able pupils achieve very well and the achievement of pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory. The most able pupils in Year 9 are able to measure the energy content of a sample of food and the standard of this work is well above the national average.

120. In 2004, results in GCSE examinations were around the national average. The pupils had not maintained the very good achievement they had made in Year 9. These results were below the higher standards of the previous two years and were due in part to a weaker cohort of pupils combined with some staffing difficulties. More able pupils achieved well; the numbers of pupils gaining the highest grades of A* and A were double the national figure. Boys' performance was slightly below that expected nationally but girls did better than the national average for girls. Standards of work evident in lessons, exercise books and the recent trial examinations are now above average and all pupils, including the most able and those with special educational needs, are achieving well.

121. Pupils achieve well because teaching and learning are good in Years 7 to 11. Teachers' subject knowledge is very good. Well structured lessons have very high expectations of what pupils can achieve, particularly numerical work which is good. Scientific ideas are explained well, and skilful questioning checks understanding, identifies and corrects misconceptions and extends knowledge. The regular use of past examination questions prepares pupils well for national examinations. Most pupils come ready to learn because relationships are very good. They listen, concentrate well and work industriously alone and in small groups. Practical work is done safely. Teachers are effectively developing new approaches to match the different ways pupils learn. Key vocabulary, concise and accurate writing, and small group discussion are improving levels of literacy.
122. The very effective use of computer technology is engaging pupils' interest and improving the depth of understanding of complicated ideas such as energy relationships in food chains. A six week computer based assignment in Year 9 is producing high quality work on health and microbes as well as developing pupils' skills of organising their own work, working independently or collaboratively, time-management, self-review and deciding what to do next. Good planning ensures science makes a good contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and citizenship. Where there is unsatisfactory teaching it does not focus on pupils' learning. Marking across the department does not give pupils sufficient guidance to help them improve their work.
123. Leadership is very good; management is good. Staff morale is high. Very well qualified teachers and technicians work together well and are committed to the highest standards for their pupils. New team members are very well supported. The recently appointed head of department has produced a thorough and accurate departmental self-evaluation. Data has been used effectively to identify where improvements are needed, for example in improving coursework and confidence in some aspects of physics in Years 10 and 11. Effective procedures are now in place to monitor teaching and the quality of pupils' written work. Procedures ensure that pupils know the level at which they are working, but pupils are currently unsure of what they must do to improve their work.
124. Since the last inspection there has been good improvement.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Most pupils have positive attitudes and behave well, and this enhances their achievement.
- The good support and guidance from teachers helps most pupils to learn effectively.
- In some lessons teaching strategies and resources do not meet the needs of the whole range of abilities in the class.
- The new head of department is making an effective start in raising standards.
- The new procedures for target setting and marking have not yet been fully implemented.

Commentary

125. The standards reached in the 2004 teacher assessments were above national expectations at the end of Year 9 and girls reached higher standards than boys. Standards were in line with

the national average for the GCSE short course results in 2004 at the end of Year 11, and girls continued to attain better than boys. Pupils' results in ICT are below those in the other subjects they take. Current standards at the end of Year 9 are in line with national expectations and are above them in Year 11.

126. Achievement in Years 7 to 9 is satisfactory. Pupils are taught in ability groups; there is no difference in achievement between girls, boys and different ethnic minority groups within lessons. There is no specific ICT programme to meet the needs of the very small number of pupils who are new to the school and those who have English as an additional language. Newly developed teaching resources provide real world contexts that build an understanding of computer modelling and most middle and higher attaining pupils achieve well because they are motivated by the work. Lower attaining pupils try hard but many are reliant upon teachers and have to wait for support when work on spreadsheets is targeted too high, resulting in unsatisfactory achievement.
127. Achievement in Years 10 and 11 is good. Most pupils act upon teacher guidance, and achieve well because of their positive attitudes. A small minority of lower attaining pupils have poor attitudes to work and make insufficient progress. Pupils with special educational needs enjoy ICT; most maintain attention and achieve satisfactorily when they have close support of teachers and teaching assistants. This group of pupils has fewer lessons than more able groups and achievement is limited because there is not enough time to review and reinforce skills.
128. There have been significant changes to the ICT department since the start of the current school year. There is an almost new teaching team. The installation of new computer rooms during the autumn term caused considerable disruption to some ICT lessons. Older ICT classrooms are small and pupils in large classes still have to share computers. The changes to the curriculum for all pupils are still being embedded. There are few records of pupil work available from previous years and this makes it difficult for teachers to confidently plan work that builds on pupils' experiences.
129. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall, but better in Years 10 and 11. There were some unsatisfactory lessons where work was too challenging, or teachers lacked effective strategies to motivate all the pupils and manage behaviour. Most teachers are well qualified and experienced and use their good knowledge and individual monitoring of pupils to raise standards. Procedures for marking are being developed and, where used, they provide high quality feedback so that pupils review and improve their work, but this has not yet been disseminated to all staff. Data is used to set targets for pupils, but in some lessons these are not shared with them, so they do not yet use predicted grades to raise their personal goals.
130. Leadership and management are good. The new head of department, although part time, delegates responsibilities well to other members of her team. A thorough evaluation of the department in readiness for the specialist mathematics and computing status of the school has been completed. A good range of policies, procedures and schemes of work are under continual development and standards are starting to rise. A minority of teachers are still undergoing training in the subject, but they are well supported by their colleagues. There has been satisfactory improvement since the previous inspection. A new curriculum for Years 7 to 9 is in place, based on the National ICT Strategy and staff benefit from the extra support of the county ICT adviser. All pupils in the school have at least one discrete lesson each week and statutory requirements are now met. There is an experienced technical team who ensure that equipment functions well.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

131. The use of information and communication technology to support teaching and learning by subjects across the curriculum is unsatisfactory, as it was at the last inspection.

132. A programme for replacement and refurbishment of computers and accommodation has started since the school acquired its specialist mathematics and computing status. A working party of subject representatives has very recently been established but has not yet made recommendations. Subject teachers are investigating uses of ICT software to support teaching and learning but most subjects do not have sufficient access to ICT.
133. Science, for example, has already made good progress, ICT is written into schemes of work and greatly enhances teaching and learning across all years. Design and technology has good access to computers that are used well for computer-aided design and in textiles. Year 10 pupils learn how to record and manipulate sounds using a computer in music, and in geography Year 8 pupils learn well through Internet research. A number of subjects have interactive whiteboards and digital projectors but these are sometimes used as a normal whiteboard and do not support teaching and learning consistently across all subjects.
134. There are a small number of computers in the school library for use both during and outside of lessons, and a new computer room is also available; these are in heavy demand by pupils for research and to present their work.

HUMANITIES

History

The provision in history is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- GCSE results improved in 2004, with pupils' performance being significantly above the national averages and girls doing particularly well.
- Pupils did significantly better in history than in other subjects they studied in 2004.
- Assessment information is not as yet consistently helping students see how they can improve, nor adequately informing the planning of lessons.
- Approaches and resources deployed by the department do not ensure that lower attaining pupils are consistently well supported and motivated.
- ICT is as yet insufficiently incorporated into the work of the department.
- Monitoring and evaluation do not as yet ensure consistency in all aspects of departmental practice.

Commentary

135. Teacher assessments of standards at the end of Year 9 are broadly in line with national expectations and consistent with performance in recent years. GCSE results improved in 2004. Overall GCSE exam results are significantly above the national average. A high proportion of top grades were awarded. The performance of girls is significantly above the average for girls nationally. Overall pupils, and most conspicuously girls, did significantly better in history than in the other subjects they studied in 2004. Standards of work seen during the inspection are above the relevant national expectations in Year 10 and 11.
136. Standards seen in class are broadly in line with national expectations in Years 7, 8 and 9. Most of these pupils make satisfactory progress and achieve satisfactorily. Year 9 pupils can generally make links between events and give some reason for and identify results of such events, for example, relating to use and impact of bombing in the Second World War. Though some pupils write well researched, structured and developed answers not all pupils clearly present sufficient detail to effectively

demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of topics studied. Pupils in Year 10 and 11 generally progress and achieve well. The proportion of pupils who opt to continue with history is higher than the national average, and care has been taken to select topics that interest and motivate pupils. Higher attaining pupils cope well with the demands of the GCSE course. They write well and evaluate sources carefully, for example in relation to the legacy of the Vietnam War. Some lower attaining pupils require more support with specific questions.

137. Teaching and learning are both good. Lessons are planned in line with school policies, linked to the National Key Stage 3 Strategy. Teachers generally introduce lessons well and clarify what is expected of pupils. In the best lessons, and most evidently in the GCSE groups, teachers employ a range of teaching styles, learning strategies and resources. These contribute positively to pupils' gains in knowledge and understanding of and positive response to the topics studied. In such circumstances pupils engage fully in lessons, behave well and are interested in what they are doing. In Year 11 very effective use of film excerpts enabled pupils to develop their understanding and form good conclusions about the consequences of the Vietnam War. In some lessons particularly in Years 7, 8, 9 there is insufficient modification of approaches and resources to ensure the lower attaining pupils are supported and motivated. Planning of these lessons does not consistently take sufficient account of pupils' prior learning. Pupils often benefit from good oral feedback on their work, but teachers' marking of work particularly in Years 7, 8, 9 does not consistently provide adequate advice on how pupils can improve. Learning is enhanced by very effective displays and a range of visits. ICT is as yet insufficiently incorporated into the work of the department to stimulate enquiry and motivation, but the use of ICT does contribute positively to the presentation of some work. Teachers increasingly deploy effective methods to strengthen pupils' literacy.
138. The subject is well led and managed. The recently appointed and enthusiastic head of department has a clear vision and aspirations for the department. This is reflected in improvement plans that are appropriately focused. The department operates smoothly despite some current staffing and timetabling difficulties. Monitoring and evaluation processes do not yet ensure consistency in the quality of all aspects of departmental practice or clear evidence of impact of some improvement agendas. There has been good improvement since the last inspection, and standards in GCSE performance and the quality of departmental planning have both significantly improved. The development of ICT remains to be fully implemented.

Religious education

Provision for religious education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- In 2004 results in the GCSE short course examination were well above the national average.
- Teachers have developed good relationships with pupils and this ensures that pupils have positive attitudes to the subject and to learning.
- Lessons are carefully planned so that tasks are completed and pupils make good progress.
- Assessment is in its early stages of development and does not yet give pupils a clear idea of how to improve.

Commentary

139. The standards of work by the end of Year 9 are in line with the expectations of the Locally Agreed Syllabus as assessed by the teachers in 2004. Pupils are able to explore and discuss concepts relating to both learning about religion and learning from religion in Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism and Sikhism. They express reasoned opinions with confidence and maturity, showing understanding of key concepts. All pupils including those with special educational needs make good progress.
140. In 2004, results for the GCSE short course are well above the national average overall and all groups of pupils attain very good standards. A significant number of pupils obtain A* grades. Pupils currently working in examination groups achieve well and have high expectations and standards are above expectations. Boys as well as girls engage with the issues and achieve well. Pupils discuss contentious material with respect and in an informed way. They are able to analyse and evaluate arguments orally and in writing.
141. Teaching and learning are both good. Teachers, including non-specialists, have good subject knowledge and use this effectively to explain and illustrate religious concepts. Pupils feel confident to ask and answer difficult questions because teachers have worked hard to establish good relationships in the classroom. This enables pupils to explore complex ideas and to consolidate their knowledge and understanding. Lessons are well planned and activities are carefully timed. As a result learning is purposeful and important tasks are completed. Carefully chosen examples from popular culture which draw on pupils' own experience make learning interesting and relevant. In the best lessons the work is set at a level appropriate to pupils' age and ability, with some challenge included for the higher attainers. At appropriate points during lessons, and in particular at the end, teachers and pupils reflect on and review the learning before moving on to the next stage.
142. Pupils show maturity and are articulate in discussion work. They have positive attitudes towards the subject and talk confidently about their high aspirations. Teachers sometimes focus on knowledge, rather than an understanding of concepts, and this limits the level of challenge for higher attaining pupils. There are insufficient opportunities for all pupils to develop their thinking skills and encourage a more independent approach.
143. Leadership and management are good. At the time of the last inspection provision for religious education was unsatisfactory. The subject leader has worked hard to ensure that the school is now fully compliant with the requirements of the Locally Agreed Syllabus in all years. All pupils in Year 10 and Year 11 now follow a GCSE short course. Religious education is taught by experienced teachers who work well collaboratively. This supports the informal arrangements for monitoring and evaluation within the department. The subject leader has a clear vision for the department and is beginning to plan for the future more systematically. Teaching assistants are deployed effectively and enjoy working in religious education lessons. Some effective use of data has been made to identify pupils who are not achieving their potential by the end of Year 9, but this type of analysis could be used to greater effect within the department. Links with primary schools are not sufficiently developed to inform the teaching of pupils in Year 7.
144. Assessment to support effective learning is in its early stages of development. All teachers of religious education have begun to use clear objectives to direct the lesson and to inform pupils of what is expected, but pupils do not gain a clear picture of how to improve from the marking of their work. There is limited use of ICT within the department and access is seen to be a problem. Accommodation overall is satisfactory, although in one room a wooden partition means that noise from other classes has an adverse effect on concentration. The subject makes a positive contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and to citizenship.
145. There has been good improvement since the last inspection and the school is now meeting its statutory requirements in Years 7 to 11, although not in the sixth form. With a strong team of teachers and an effective subject leader religious education is well placed to make good progress in the future.

Geography

Provision in geography is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of leadership and management is very good.
- The standard of work is above the national average.
- Teaching is good overall.
- High quality displays of work enhance the environment.
- The provision of fieldwork opportunities generates interest in the subject.

Commentary

146. The teachers' assessment of pupils at the end of Year 9 in 2004 indicates that standards are above the national expectation. Inspection findings confirm this. Pupils enter school from a range of primary schools with varying backgrounds in their knowledge of geography, and with standards below national expectations overall. By the end of Year 9 standards have been raised significantly and their achievement is very good. In the 2004 GCSE examinations the percentage of pupils gaining A* to C grades is above the national average. By the end of Year 11 the pupils make good achievement based on statistical analysis of their results between Years 9 and 11. Analysis of pupils' work, lesson observations and discussions with pupils confirm standards above the national average.
147. The quality of both teaching and learning is good overall, with ample evidence of very good practice. The very good subject knowledge of the staff is well used to challenge the thinking skills of the pupils. Lessons are well planned so that work proceeds smoothly and logically enabling all pupils to make good progress. Teachers use a wide range of resources to match the different learning styles of the pupils and help them to apply skills learnt in a variety of contexts. In a Year 10 lesson on rivers, the teacher used her own ideas for very effective practical demonstrations of how changing factors affect the rate of erosion and deposition. The good relationship between staff and pupils creates an atmosphere in which good learning takes place and the good displays of work in the classrooms enhance the learning environment. Pupils achieve high productivity in each lesson as seen in an enthusiastic Year 8 computer lesson on the Three Gorges Dam in China. However, although there is plenty of evidence of pupils' use of computers, it is in work generally done at home because there is little access to computers in classrooms.
148. Leadership and management are both very good. Innovative ideas, clear vision and hard work are strong features of leadership. The head of department is seen to "lead by example" and provides a very good role model. Staff report on the commitment and high quality of support, which is highly praised by new staff, as well as governance by consensus, these are marked features of the department. The well organised documentation and very good systems in place enable the smooth running of the

department and the development of a very cohesive team. The provision of fieldwork opportunities for the pupils is a strength and helps to maintain the interest of the pupils in the subject. Lessons and pupils' work are monitored on a regular basis. Revision sessions outside normal school hours and mentoring support for pupils with special needs, have been introduced to help raise the achievement of the pupils. Ideas developed in the department contribute to whole school policies.

149. Very good improvement has been made since the last inspection. All issues raised have been addressed. Schemes of work have been updated and new units, for example the geography of football, have been introduced in order to cater for the needs and interests of the pupils. Resources have improved and the innovative introduction of geographical information systems has resulted in some of the very good work on display. Very good systems for assessment and analysis of data are used effectively to set targets and raise standards of attainment. The marking of pupils' work includes levels attained as well as constructive comments on how to improve. Standards of attainment by pupils at the end of both Year 9 and Year 11 have improved significantly since the time of the last inspection.

TECHNOLOGY

Design and technology

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is strong leadership and management of the subject.
- Pupils make good progress up to the age of 14, but GCSE standards are inconsistent across the different specialisms.
- There is a significant amount of very good teaching.
- Marking is inconsistent and comments on improvement are not recorded systematically.
- Very effective use is made of ICT, but equipment for computer-aided manufacture is inadequate.

Commentary

150. By the end of Year 9 overall attainment is in line with national expectations. Standards in design and technology when pupils enter the school are variable, and below national expectations for some pupils as they have limited experience of the subject. From the time they enter the school, pupils of all abilities make good progress due to high quality teaching. Girls make better progress than boys.
151. By the end of Year 11 standards are still around the national average overall, with 56 per cent of pupils gaining A*-C grades. They do better in graphics and resistant materials, where pupils gain higher grades than in other subjects. Pupils taking electronics, textiles and food did less well compared with their grades in other subjects. The standard of work seen in lessons was higher than this and new appointments and recent stability in staffing are already addressing these differences. All pupils, including those with special educational needs are able to achieve satisfactorily.
152. The quality of teaching and learning is good with a significant amount of very good teaching particularly in Years 7, 8 and 9. Teachers have excellent subject knowledge, plan in detail and work hard to maintain positive learning relationships with pupils. Teachers support and

challenge pupils very well during lessons. Informal assessment and verbal feedback on how to improve are very good. Marking is not regular or consistent with insufficient written comments telling pupils how they can improve their work. Display is a strength in the subject with a very good balance of written and practical work, informative posters and a celebration of excellence. Technical support is high quality and very effective. However, technical support time for food and textiles is inadequate.

153. The leadership and management of design and technology are good. Policies, procedures and planning are well developed and impacting positively on practice in the classroom. There is an emerging emphasis on teaching and learning and this is already helping to raise standards. The recently published National Key Stage 3 framework for teaching design is forming a useful focus to further improve the quality of teaching and learning.
154. Opportunities for extra-curricular activities in design and technology are very good. Pupils are encouraged to gain external certification through the 'Taste of Success Awards' which pupils greatly enjoy taking part in. Other pupils have been successful in the F1 in Schools and national design competitions. All material areas offer opportunities for pupils to do additional work outside lessons.
155. Design and technology is well resourced with teachers and pupils making good use of computers for research, designing and making. The latter is restricted due to a lack of larger scale computer aided manufacture equipment in resistant materials and computer controlled sewing machines in textiles. Software for system design in electronics is out of date and food technology lacks industrial process equipment such as a tunnel oven. The department has no large format transfer printing system, which limits the quality of products.
156. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory. Standards in GCSE examinations had fallen, but some recent appointments and stable staffing is already beginning to redress this. The significant strengths in teaching and good leadership and management provide a strong foundation for further improvement.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

Art and design

Provision for art and design is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of teaching is good overall, but inconsistent.
- Standards have improved over the past three years, and are now satisfactory.
- The subject remains popular with pupils and students.
- There are few opportunities for experimentation and exploration in the use of different media in both two and three dimensions, and this limits pupils' imaginative and creative responses.
- There are few opportunities to use sketchbooks for investigation.
- The lack of storage limits pupils' responses and the opportunity to work in a large scale.

Commentary

157. By the age of 14 pupils attained standards in teacher assessment in 2004 that were broadly in line with the national expectations. The standards in GCSE examinations in 2004 were in line with the national average. This is an improving trend, and is a good

measure of developments since the last inspection which are improving standards and achievement. The attainment of boys is slightly higher than that attained by girls in 2004. However, there is no significant difference noted in the classes seen and work examined.

158. Standards seen in Years 7, 8 and 9 are in line with national expectations, pupils make good progress and achieve well from the low standards they have when they start. Pupils are able to apply graphic skills using pencil, pastel, paint, including acrylic, chalk pastels and basic forms of printing. They develop an increasing understanding of the figure, form, proportions and the use of line and tone. They can use techniques for modelling in clay with increasing skill and confidence. They exhibit an increasing knowledge and awareness of the art of other cultures such as that found in Africa and Australia and use this as an inspiration for their own work. The use of sketchbooks is mostly focused upon homework studies rather than as a visual diary to record ideas, techniques, experiments and concepts that might be inspired by the work of other artists. The opportunities for building upon these activities are fewer in Year 9. Consequently, these pupils make slower progress and achievement is only satisfactory.
159. Standards seen in GCSE classes are also in line with expectations. At the start of Year 10 pupils are able to develop their graphic skills using a similar range of media to that used before. These are well developed by the start of Year 11. Again, the use of a sketchbook is used mainly for homework rather than as a visual diary. There is an increasing expectation of pupils to use these to record ideas using familiar media as well as information on the work of other artists. However, using sketchbooks for investigating ideas or exploring unfamiliar media has yet to be fully established. Consequently, in Year 11 progress is slower and achievement remains satisfactory.
160. The involvement of critical and contextual studies, using the work of other artists of both the western tradition and that of other cultures is weak. The study of contemporary artists and designers, or the use of artists in residence has yet to become central to pupils' studies in art and design and help in raising standards and levels of achievement across all years.
161. The quality of teaching is good overall, but some is unsatisfactory. Where the teaching is good there is effective and detailed preparation and planning that identifies key words and resources, demonstrations are effective, and there is lots of ongoing support that ensures that pupils make progress and that achievement is good. Pupils are well managed and effectively organised. Relationships are very good and pupils behave very well in lessons. Pupils exhibit good attitudes, respond well and obviously enjoy their time in art. Consequently, the quality of learning is good; pupils exhibit increasing confidence and skill and are therefore able to make good progress. This is most notable in Years 7, 8, and 10. Where teaching is unsatisfactory the majority of pupils coast through most of the lesson, their progress in the lesson is slow, achievement is below expectations and there is a lack of significant challenge and pace in the lesson. Although homework is a regular feature, only occasionally does it extend the work done in class.
162. Sometimes lessons are directed too closely by the teacher, and this can hinder the use of imagination, creativity or the opportunity to experiment in some lessons, particularly in GCSE classes. The lack of a significant opportunity to explore and experiment with media, ideas and the work of others or of applying both familiar and unfamiliar techniques and methods in their own work means that pupils are sometimes held back from achieving much higher standards. Moreover, the continued confusion between learning objectives and lesson activity is a further hindrance to better progress and higher achievement and standards.

163. Teachers provide lots of ongoing support during the lesson in order that pupils are able to resolve, for example technical problems to ensure that pupils are able to successfully complete their work. The department now monitors and records progress in all years. This is particularly detailed in GCSE classes where monitoring identifies potential grades and targets for improvement. Although the department is now rich in data it has yet to develop a more sharply focused analysis of this information in order to ensure a significant improvement in performance.
164. Leadership and management are satisfactory; there is clear guidance on issues for development, particularly on those identified in the last inspection. Making progress with some of these issues is taking longer than anticipated. Documentation is satisfactory and identifies systems for monitoring pupils' progress and attainment. The department is using data to identify pupils' attainment in examinations, but the use of data to inform planning and support pupils' progress through the school is not yet effective in raising standards. The recent department development plan rightly identifies areas for improving standards and the development of the use of ICT in art and design. The lack of space limits pupils' opportunities to work on a large scale. Improvement since last inspection is satisfactory.

Music

Provision in music is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching in Years 10 and 11 leads to good achievement.
- Teaching in Years 7 to 9 does not cater for the learning needs of all pupils.
- There are good opportunities for more able pupils to extend their music making outside of the classroom.
- Pupils are not sufficiently involved in assessing their progress and this affects their motivation and achievement.
- The curriculum provides insufficient time for pupils to make satisfactory progress in Year 9.

Commentary

165. Teacher assessments indicate that in 2004, standards at the end of Year 9 were average with only a few pupils attaining the higher levels. Standards in the current Year 8 are a little above the expected level, but they are only average by the end of Year 9 because they have less curriculum time. The small numbers of pupils taking GCSE examinations in recent years have attained above average standards. In 2004, most pupils did less well in music than in their other subjects. Standards in the current Year 11 group are well above average, and in the current Year 10 group, they are average.
166. Achievement in Years 7 to 9 is satisfactory. Pupils develop understanding of notation, musical vocabulary, and a selection of musical styles. Their creativity is limited by the structures within which they are required to work. Achievement in Years 10 and 11 is good. Pupils develop understanding of selected musical styles, and most compose competently within them. Less able pupils have more difficulty composing because of a lack of computers to help them.

167. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. There is some good teaching in Years 10 and 11 where pupils in small groups benefit from focused support. Some teaching makes effective use of ICT to promote understanding. Learning activities in Years 7 to 9 do not meet the needs of everyone. Some activities do not interest boys, and they underachieve. Talented pupils find the work easy and this limits their achievement. Lessons are generally well-planned, and well-presented worksheets support learning. Good use is made of homework, which pupils can access through a website. Classes are effectively controlled, but the strongly teacher-directed approach does not engage pupils enough in their learning. Pupils are not sufficiently involved in the assessment of their work and this affects motivation and achievement.
168. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Experienced teachers ensure that the day-to-day running of the department is effective. Instrumental tuition is very well managed and given full financial support by the school. Some of the more popular instruments are not available to learn. Extra-curricular activities offer good quality opportunities for those taking lessons, but are based on a narrow range of musical styles. There are detailed schemes of work, although assessment arrangements are unsatisfactory and do not help pupils to improve their work. Policies for literacy and numeracy are thorough and well-implemented.
169. Progress since the time of the previous inspection is unsatisfactory because many of the issues raised have not been addressed. Curriculum time in Year 9 is still inadequate, and pupils do not have a continuous learning experience. The department is now housed in newer accommodation, but this lacks both space and effective soundproofing.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Provision in physical education is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve well because teaching is consistently good or better.
- Good leadership promotes a wide range of extra-curricular activities.
- Good relationships between staff and pupils assist learning.
- GCSE results are significantly well below average.
- Assessment, including marking at GCSE, does not show pupils clearly enough how to improve.

Commentary

170. Teacher assessments by the end of Year 9 in 2004 were well above the national average, but these appear generous when compared with standards in the present Year 10. Standards seen in class are average in Year 9 and indicate good achievement compared with the below average standards on entry in Year 7. All pupils know the importance of a warm up prior to exercise and many can name some large muscle groups. In Year 9 pupils' knowledge and understanding of hockey are good and stick work of more able pupils is above average. In netball, girls in Year 8 have below average skills and accuracy in passing and receiving the ball. Their knowledge and understanding of the game are below average, mainly due to their poor attitudes in the lesson and their lack of concentration.

171. The GCSE examination results in 2004 are well below the national average, although all pupils achieved a pass grade. Currently standards are average overall both in the GCSE classes and on the general course taken by all pupils. Standards in a Year 10 GCSE theory lesson are below average because of the unsatisfactory attitudes of some pupils to their work and their lack of interest. In a GCSE basketball lesson, pupils in Year 11 reach above average standards. Their knowledge and understanding of the game are very good and they understand the differences between strategies of attack and defence in a game. They play to an above average level, indicating good achievement. In the GCSE course, written work is average and mainly involves note taking and the completion of worksheets. Opportunities for extended writing are limited. Overall achievement is good, apart from in the GCSE classes, where it is satisfactory.
172. Teaching and learning are good across all years, but assessment is unsatisfactory in Years 10 and 11. The teachers' good subject knowledge, enthusiasm and the good relationships motivate pupils to work well. Good planning includes learning objectives but these are not always shared with pupils. There are few opportunities for pupils to take responsibility in lessons, such as leading a warm up, which is often teacher led. There is no link to the National Curriculum in lesson plans and in this respect teachers' knowledge is in need of refreshment. Pupils with special educational needs are integrated into all lessons and usually make satisfactory or good progress. Occasionally, the highest attaining pupils do not receive work and activities to extend them fully. However, the programme of extra-curricular activities provides a range of opportunities for all pupils. Teachers are competent in ICT but there are too few opportunities for pupils to enhance their work in lessons.
173. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are good in the majority of lessons and this contributes to their learning. The Junior Sports Leaders; Award is a recent introduction in Year 10. This gives opportunities for personal development and the raising of self-esteem for pupils. At present not all pupils are positive enough in their attitudes and mature enough when working with primary school pupils who visit the school. There are few non-participants in lessons and this is an improvement on the previous inspection.
174. New assessment procedures are in place to monitor progress of pupils by the end of Year 9 which are more realistic and match those of the National Curriculum. Assessment by the end of Year 11 is unsatisfactory, as is the marking of pupils' GCSE work. It does not show pupils clearly enough the progress they are making towards their predicted grades for the examination. Reports to parents are unsatisfactory as they do not show clearly what pupils know, understand or can do or the levels they have achieved.
175. Good leadership and management ensure that all teachers share a commitment to raising standards. Most teachers, including the head of department, are new appointments and targets for development have been identified. Schemes of work are in place in Years 7 to 9 in line with Curriculum 2000, but they have yet to be formulated in Years 10 and 11, where the curriculum provision is unsatisfactory. There is no curriculum plan to indicate coverage of the National Curriculum. Monitoring of teaching now takes place and links with primary feeder schools are improving, due mainly to the appointment of a School Sports Co-ordinator based at the school. Although this is an improvement since the previous inspection, there is still no curriculum information available from feeder schools as to the standards on entry to the school to ensure continuity.

176. Pupils extend and enrich their work and raise their achievement through participation in a wide range of extra-curricular activities. School teams are successful particularly in basketball. A high number of pupils have achieved success at local, county and regional level in a range of sports and sporting clubs in the locality provide valuable coaching for pupils out of school time.
177. The provision of the sports hall has increased opportunities for pupils but resources for gymnastics are unsuitable to teach the intended curriculum. The present timetable arrangements, plus the inadequate changing facilities are not helpful in raising standards. GCSE results have deteriorated since the previous inspection, but improvement overall has been satisfactory.

BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES

178. The applied GCSE in leisure and tourism was sampled. This is a new course. Pupils are almost all from the lowest sets and standards are below those expected. Teaching and learning are satisfactory, most pupils are attentive throughout the lesson but there is a limited range of teaching styles. Pupils make satisfactory progress and learn about air travel and different types of tourism, making comparisons with other forms of travel. There is not enough curriculum time for this course which is the equivalent of two GCSEs, and pupils do not have enough opportunity to further their vocational knowledge using projects with relevance to the business world.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Citizenship

Provision in citizenship is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good leadership has vision and plans to develop the subject thoroughly.
- Citizenship programmes are fully established within the life skills programme.
- Teaching is of variable quality because of the lack of staff training and of specific support for pupils with special educational needs.
- There is no strategy for ensuring that all pupils have opportunity to participate in active citizenship.

Commentary

179. Citizenship is taught within the life-skills programme. Since September 2004, this has operated for one lesson per week. Pupils are taught in mixed ability form groups. The programme uses materials from a published scheme and addresses most issues in personal, social and health education. A substantial number of modules focus on citizenship. By using this scheme the school has ensured that the requirements for the teaching of the subject are met.
180. Standards in citizenship at the end of Year 9 meet national expectations, and achievement is satisfactory. Evidence from the folders of pupils in Years 7 to 9 demonstrates that they are gaining understanding of the key issues, all the strands of the National Curriculum are covered, and through written work and discussion they

are beginning to formulate their own views and opinions. The modules within the programme which relate to citizenship in Years 10 and 11 had not been fully covered at the time of the inspection. Therefore there was not enough work available to make a judgement on standards or achievement.

181. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. In the best lessons seen, teachers were using the materials confidently and supporting pupils in understanding and developing their own opinions. Variations in the quality of teaching seen were because teachers are not all committed and confident to deliver the programme. Some teachers do not have the experience or expertise to effectively teach mixed ability classes and the pupils are in unfamiliar groupings. The marking of folders is inconsistent from class to class. Pupils with special educational needs do not receive enough support, and their learning is unsatisfactory.
182. Leadership and management are good because teachers responsible for the subject have a clear vision and determination to further develop it effectively. Weaknesses in the current delivery of the subject are clearly identified, and plans are in place to address them in a thorough and structured way. Some monitoring of teaching and of folder work is taking place and this is at an early stage of development. Materials and schemes of work are well organised. The programme has not been adapted to meet the specific backgrounds and needs of all the pupils at the school. The tracking of progress in learning is not fully developed. Teachers have had limited training. Good examples of citizenship being taught as part of the subject curriculum were noted in drama, religious education, ICT and music. The school has not yet identified how thoroughly citizenship is taught across subject programmes, nor has the awareness of subject leaders been raised about how they can address issues within their subjects more clearly.
183. The school provides some good opportunities for pupils to be engaged in activities which relate to being good citizens. There is a school council, a school bank, and during the inspection week, pupils were being encouraged to think about disabilities in preparation for Comic Relief day. The opportunities on offer have not been audited and this means that although a lot of work is being done, there is no specific strategy for ensuring that all pupils participate in active citizenship.

WORK-RELATED LEARNING

The overall quality of provision in work-related learning is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The current provision meets statutory requirements and is well placed for continuing development.
- The leadership of the programme is effective and current elements in it are well co-ordinated.
- Currently there is a limited range of vocational courses and business links and limited access to them.
- Involvement on the part of all subject areas across the curriculum in support of work-related learning is underdeveloped.

Commentary

184. The current programme meets statutory requirements. Provision is made for all pupils to learn through work, about work and for work in the content of core life skills courses across all years. Within these courses in Years 10 and 11 there is an identifiable focus on aspects of careers education and preparation for, and a follow up to, work experience. All pupils undertake a block of work experience in Year 11. Through aspects of the current programme all pupils are given some knowledge, understanding and experience of work, whilst developing awareness of enterprise, employment opportunities and skills relevant to employment.
185. Whilst ensuring a limited, but coherent, programme for all pupils in Year 10 through its "4 routes to success" system, the school allows for some additional and regular work experience, vocational school or college based courses, business enterprise simulation and experiences for specifically identified groups of pupils. There is evidence of the positive impact of such alternative programmes and opportunities in the attendance, attitudes and achievements of certain individuals and groups of pupils within the school.
186. The school is committed to developments in this area of its work and is well placed to develop them. The recently appointed head of the work-related programme is effective. She has a vision for development of the programme and a clear commitment to quality, coherent delivery and relevant training in relation to the programme. Current elements are well co-ordinated. A clear direction for work-related learning is informing improvement plans. These recognise a need to build on current limited arrangements by broadening the range of, and access to, vocational courses, restructuring work experience, building up business links and both auditing and co-coordinating the current and potential contribution of subject areas in support of work-related learning.

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM

In the inspection, 11 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	3	100	78.3	0	21.6	30	28.5
Biology	4	50	63.5	0	10.4	10	19.8
Chemistry	2	50	70.3	0	13.2	10	23
Drama	1	100	86.6	100	19.8	50	30.9
Product design	1	100	72.6	100	13.9	50	24.3
Geography	4	75	75.5	0	20.4	25	27
History	5	40	82.2	0	20.8	16	29.2
ICT	3	66.7	66.6	0	8.8	20	20.6
English literature	2	100	86.2	0	17.4	25	29.7
Mathematics	5	40	59.9	20	14.1	16	20.5
Sports studies	1	100	72.2	0	11.8	20	22.8
Physics	3	33.3	66.4	0	14.8	10	22.4
Psychology	3	100	67.8	0	14.8	30	22.4
Philosophy and ethics	7	57.1	82.2	14.3	26.1	21.4	31.2

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	5	100	87.1	60	50.2	92	87.1
Biology	9	67	96.6	22	40	51	79.3
Chemistry	8	100	97.7	38	50	75	85.7
German	1	100	98.6	0	49.6	40	86.3
Drama	9	100	99.6	55.6	42.8	86.7	85.1
Product design	6	100	97.8	17	35	77	77.9
Further mathematics	2	100	n/a	50	n/a	80	n/a
French	4	100	99	25	53.1	80	88.9
Spanish	1	100	53.5	100	98.2	120	88.7
Food technology	5	100	n/a	40	n/a	84	n/a
Geography	15	93	98.8	40	46.4	79	85.2
History	24	100	99	29.2	45.6	73.3	85.1
Computing	7	57.1	96.3	0	25.7	34.3	71.1
English literature	22	95.5	99.4	27.3	44	75.5	85.5
Mathematics	11	100	96.8	55	56.6	85	89.5
Sports studies	6	100	97.8	33.3	30.9	80	75.4
Physics	7	100	96.7	42.9	45.3	85.7	82.6
Politics	12	100	n/a	25	n/a	73	n/a
Psychology	17	100	98.2	29.4	44.2	80	82.5
Philosophy and ethics	3	100	99.1	66.7	49.5	93.3	87.4
Music	1	100	98.2	0	37.1	40	79.5
Chinese	1	100	n/a	100	n/a	120	n/a

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

English

Provision in English is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers' very good subject knowledge is contributing significantly to teaching and learning.
- Teachers' high expectations and strong sense of purpose are making an important contribution to students' progress and standards.

- Very good relationships between teachers and students are resulting in a very effective learning environment.
- Students' positive attitudes and application to work are having a significant impact on learning.
- Too much reliance on teachers to direct and guide their work is limiting students' development as independent learners.
- Teachers' marking of work is not sufficiently identifying students' strengths and weaknesses.

Commentary

187. Students' attainment in the 2004 A-level GCE examinations was below average, although their achievement based on the progress from their GCSE results was satisfactory. This indicates a decline in standards from the previous year, although twice as many students were entered for the examination. It is not possible to validly compare the results of boys and girls because only a small number of boys was entered. However, boys achieved well above the national average, and girls well below average. It is also not possible to evaluate AS level results because the number of students entered in the last two years has been very small.
188. Currently, students' achievement is good, with the majority of students progressing well. The standard of work seen during the inspection was above expectations overall, and there was no significant difference in the achievement of boys and girls. With the exception of students whose first language is not English, ethnic minority pupils are achieving similarly to other students. However, they are sometimes more reluctant to offer suggestions and ideas during discussion. Overall, students are making good progress.
189. In discussion and in their writings, students studying for A-level examinations are able to respond closely to literary texts. They demonstrate understanding of characterisation and inter-relationships, and are able to cite evidence and use quotation from the text in support of their views. They are capable of efficient note-taking and annotation of texts. Students indicate a grasp of literary concepts such as third-person narration and rhyming couplets; they know the concept of 'courtly love' and can understand Chaucer's undermining of that convention in *The Canterbury Tales*. Students are well able to enhance their learning by collaborating in group work.
190. The written work of A-level students seen during the inspection indicates the ability to write well at length. Most students' work is well organised and effectively structured. Writing is generally fluent, with a wide range of vocabulary, including the use of specialist terminology, and a good degree of technical accuracy. Standards of presentation are good. Less able writers have more difficulty in structuring their writing, sometimes using repetitive, awkward expression and have some problems with spelling.
191. The quality of teaching is good. Students speak positively about the quality of teaching they receive. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and high expectations of work and behaviour. The relationship between teachers and students is very good. The high quality of teaching impacts directly on students' very good attitudes and high levels of concentration. Lessons are very purposeful and students are enjoying their studies. The marking of students' written work is always positive and encouraging.

However, teachers do not sufficiently identify the specific strengths in students' work and what is needed for improvement.

192. The quality of learning is good. Students are regularly provided with opportunities to work in groups and to develop ideas and understanding through co-operative activity. These opportunities enable them to extend their thinking and learning. However, there are few planned opportunities for students to work independently. Some lessons seen during the inspection were very teacher-led, with students rarely taking responsibility for their own learning.
193. Leadership and management of the subject are very good. Sixth form provision is efficiently co-ordinated. There is a strong sense of shared purpose and team spirit amongst teachers. However, the use of assessment data is underdeveloped and it is not yet being used sufficiently to effectively contribute to improvement. There has been satisfactory improvement since the previous inspection.

Language and literacy in the sixth form

194. Standards of literacy and presentation are positively contributing to students' learning and progress, and they are enabling students to meet the demands of their courses. Students are sufficiently competent readers to meet the reading requirements in their subjects. They are effectively building up their specialist vocabulary and most students are able to organise efficiently their written work and to write with reasonable standards of technical accuracy. The small number of students whose first language is not English are clearly having difficulties with language and this is hindering their progress.

French

Provision in French is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is good and challenging; students are very well motivated and apply themselves diligently to their studies.
- Students successfully extend and refine their language skills during their course.
- The curriculum is lively, broad and well constructed.

Commentary

195. Standards are around the national average. Only a small number of students choose to study French in the sixth form. Most have obtained high grades, A*, A, or B in their GCSE studies, and they are guided carefully towards a final goal of GCE AS or A-level. In the past two years every student entered for an examination in modern foreign languages has attained grade E or above. Students achieve satisfactorily in their examinations.
196. Standards of work seen during the inspection are around the national expectation. In a Year 12 group, students listened attentively to a French song on a contemporary topic and developed their dictionary skills well to report back to others on some key phrases and vocabulary, all through the target language. Students in a Year 13 group lesson

were working with interest at a listening task, which led on to some good quality written reporting and good oral discussion.

197. Written work is being suitably developed through study of authentic reading materials, close analysis of text and exchange of ideas in class. Sampling of students' work revealed secure knowledge of several tenses, accurate use of pronouns and an emerging fluidity of expression, including idiomatic phrases and a good range of connectives. During their time in the sixth form, students increase their skills, understanding and confidence and they progress well, with males and females achieving equally.
198. Teaching and learning are good, classes are deliberately shared and the planning and liaison which this requires are carried out effectively by well-qualified and committed staff. Good teaching in both years combines skilful use of French to probe or challenge students' views in a good humoured way with clear explanation and coaching in grammar and supportive guidance materials to aid revision. Expectations are high, and students respond positively, developing a capacity to take initiative and work independently. Teachers' marking in student files is helpful, specific and advice is constructive.
199. The curriculum is broad and well constructed. Access to a range of authentic reading and recorded materials and to individual discussion opportunities with the foreign language assistant supplement the good provision made for students' success on the course. The students themselves contribute with diligence and high levels of motivation. Good progress has been made since the last inspection.

MATHEMATICS

Provision for mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers' knowledge of the subject is good.
- Students apply themselves well to the course and their achievement is above average.
- Teaching methods do not always allow for discussion or collaborative work between students.
- There are high numbers on the courses and retention rates are good.

Commentary

200. In 2004 standards at A-level were average; in previous years standards had been well above average. The difference between the standards reached by boys and girls in the subject is quite marked. The majority of A-level mathematics pupils are boys and their attainment is consistently well above national averages for boys. Boys' performance in mathematics at A-level is in line with that in other subjects, but girls' performance is below. In 2004 almost all the boys attained the highest grades, A and B. At AS level in 2004 no girls attained the highest grades.
201. Standards seen in class are above expectations, but the difference between boys and girls is maintained. Students achieve well on AS, A level and the further mathematics A-level courses. Year 13 students make use of earlier work when tackling problems in mechanics. Their algebraic skills are secure and enable students to have the confidence to apply their skills to solving more complex problems. Year 12 further mathematics students can confidently find missing coefficients in complex number problems.

202. Teaching and learning are good. In all lessons teachers' subject knowledge enables them to explain concepts well so that students can apply the skills to a range of problems. However there is sometimes too much exposition by the teacher. This does not allow the discussion or questioning needed to help students attain a deeper understanding. There are few opportunities for collaborative work. Support for individual students however is very good. Here teachers use more probing questions and counter examples to test understanding. Although students occasionally use computers in their mathematics lessons, ICT is not a regular feature and is not contributing as it should to their development in understanding the subject.
203. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory. The high numbers of students studying mathematics in the sixth form has been maintained and standards are still high.

Mathematics across the sixth form

204. Mathematics across the curriculum is good in the sixth form. Students use their mathematical skills well in a number of subjects, notably science and geography. In geography for example they use data analysis well in population studies. Numeracy supports their study of biology, chemistry and physics well.

SCIENCE

The science department offers courses at A- and AS level GCE in biology, chemistry, and physics. Chemistry was the main focus for the inspection and lessons in biology and physics were sampled.

Chemistry

Provision in chemistry is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good teaching and subject knowledge help students achieve well.
- Standards of work are above the national average.
- Leadership and management are good.
- Learning opportunities are limited by inadequate ICT facilities and weak links to industry and university departments.

Commentary

205. A-level and AS level results in chemistry are around the national average. This is good achievement overall when compared to students' prior attainment. Retention rates on AS and A-level courses are very good.
206. Standards observed in lessons and in the scrutiny of students' work are now above average. Achievement compared to prior attainment is good. More able students are attaining very high standards. In Year 13 students have a very good understanding of chemicals called amines. They quickly grasped the structure of nylon when they knew the formulae of the starting chemicals. In Year 12, students quickly learned how to calculate the different amounts of energy that would be produced when two similar molecules were burned.
207. Teaching and learning are very good. The very good subject knowledge of the teachers helps these able students make good progress and enables them to develop good attitudes to their learning. Both teachers use a thinking skills approach and students respond very well. They are stimulated to offer their own explanations, listen critically and improve the quality of their work by "thinking aloud" and responding to comments and questions from their peers. Both teachers bring their extensive knowledge of marking A-level work to bear when assessing students' work and helping them know what they need to do to improve their grades.
208. Leadership and management are good. The recently appointed head of department has undertaken an accurate evaluation of the department. She has a clear vision for the development of chemistry within the school. Although the current chemistry course is well planned and organised, learning opportunities are currently restricted by the lack of Internet-linked demonstration computers in the chemistry laboratories and the lack of opportunities to visit chemical industries or university departments.

Biology

209. The 2004 A-level GCE results were below average. This is unsatisfactory achievement when compared to students' prior attainment at GCSE. Teaching and learning were very good in the Year 13 lesson observed. Achievement compared to

prior attainment was very good. The use of high quality computer animations and very skilful use of the interactive whiteboard ensured that students made rapid progress in their understanding of the complex ideas needed to explain how nerve impulses pass along nerve fibres. One pupil had gained maximum marks in a modular examination taken in January 2005.

Physics

210. The 2004 A-level GCE results were above average. On two occasions, pupils scored full marks in the module examinations. This is satisfactory achievement when compared to students' prior attainment at GCSE. Teaching and learning were very good in the Year 12 lesson observed. Achievement compared to prior attainment was good. Very good teacher knowledge expertly linked prior GCSE knowledge to the energy levels of the electron in a hydrogen atom. Students quickly gained a detailed understanding of this demanding idea and readily predicted further patterns of electron behaviour in the hydrogen atom.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Provision for information and communication technology (ICT) in the sixth form is **good**.

- There is strong leadership and management.
- The quality of teaching is very good, with detailed planning.
- Teacher's subject knowledge is excellent, they are enthusiastic and have recent commercial experience.
- Students have a very positive attitude to the subject and enjoy ICT lessons.
- Regular assessments are carried out and high quality verbal feedback is given to students, but these are not systematically recorded.

Commentary

211. The small number of students who took the ICT GCSE examination in 2004 achieved grades well below the national average and their grades were below those achieved in their other subjects. However the standard of work seen during lessons was above expectations and the numbers taking ICT are now rising. During the inspection the school received results for upper sixth students who had retaken examinations in January 2005. All students had increased their results by two full grades.

212. Pupils were seen making very good progress during lessons and are achieving very well. Year 13 projects were well advanced and pupils are on line to complete by the deadline. Students' knowledge and skills are also well developed in preparation for the theory exam. Year 12 students were seen creating presentations to explain how information can be entered into computers. This involved students in research across a wide range of sources. When finished, students present their work to Year 13 pupils. This serves a double purpose, helping older pupils with revision who, in turn offer a critical appraisal for the Year 12 students.

213. The quality of teaching is very good and a strength of the subject. Teachers are enthusiastic, have excellent subject knowledge and plan lessons in detail. High quality support materials are available to pupils through shared areas on the school network and there are plans to make these available through the school intranet. Learning is also very good; students are enthusiastic and committed.

214. Leadership of ICT is good, with a clear strategic vision on provision in the sixth form and how it should be developed. Management is also good with plans to broaden the range of examinations to include a vocational course and key ICT skills for other sixth form pupils. Teachers recognise that improving the quality of written assessment is a key to further raising standards. Resources are well managed with policies and procedures in place and being implemented.
215. There is good provision for taught ICT lessons in the sixth form and access to computers during private study. Sixth form students are being given the opportunity to mentor younger pupils in the school with the idea of extending this to support pupils in primary schools.
216. Until January of this year, examination results had not risen since the previous inspection. However, work seen during lessons was of a much higher standard and there were dramatic improvements in grades from the January examinations. The recent staff changes have had a very positive effect, together with the very good attitude of students. Recent changes in provision for ICT have already had an impact and there is clear capacity for further improvement.

ICT across the sixth form curriculum

217. Provision for ICT in the sixth form is unsatisfactory. Although students have good ICT skills generally, teachers do not use ICT in a systematic way for supporting teaching and learning, apart from in taught ICT lessons, design and technology and some aspects of science. Computers are used in all areas of design and technology. For example, students use computers to design, print and cut out very high quality packaging using a computer controlled knife cutter.
218. In science one teacher has developed extensive, high quality presentations to simulate and explain complex scientific processes. These are presented using an interactive whiteboard and digital projector and there is now demand from other teachers for similar resources.
219. In other subjects there is isolated use of ICT. For example in RE, modern languages and PE computers are used for Internet research and report writing. Mathematics students use ICT for checking the accuracy of functions and students in music technology use computers for composition. Building on the existing good practice and with resources from specialist school status, the school is making a priority of helping teachers make better use of ICT in their teaching and to support students' learning.

HUMANITIES

Geography

Provision in geography is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of leadership and management is very good.
- The standard of work is above average.
- Teaching is good overall.
- The provision of fieldwork opportunities generates interest in the subject.
- A lack of specialist accommodation restricts the effectiveness of teaching and learning.

Commentary

220. Standards in the 2004 A-level GCE examination were above the national average. The percentage of students achieving the higher A and B grades was above the national average, and all students who entered for the examination achieved a pass grade. The standard of work seen during the inspection is in line with expectations. The progress made by the students, based on their prior attainment, shows good achievement during the course.
221. The quality of both teaching and learning is good overall with ample evidence of very good practice. All teaching seen was good and better. The very good subject knowledge of the staff is well used to challenge the thinking skills of the students. Lessons are well planned with ample supply of resources to enable the students to select relevant information to extend their knowledge and understanding of the subject. The good relationship between staff and students permits good discussion of key concepts as observed in a lesson on climatic climax vegetation in the tropical rainforest of Mexico. Very good use of resources in a lesson on coastal landforms challenged the skills of the students and resulted in an enthusiastic response to the lesson. However lack of access to computers in the classrooms inhibits their use in teaching and learning. The lack of adequate accommodation in the department results in lessons being taught in rooms not suitable for the subject and reduces the quality of teaching and learning.
222. Leadership and management are both very good. Innovative ideas, clear vision and hard work are strong features of leadership. The well organised documentation, and very good systems in place, enable the smooth running of the department and the development of a very cohesive team. The provision of fieldwork opportunities for the students is a strength and helps to maintain the interest of the students in the subject.
223. Very good improvement has been achieved since the last inspection. Examination results have improved from average to above the national average. Resources have improved with the purchase of new texts to match syllabus requirements and there is a good supply of reference material in the department library. Very good systems for assessment and analysis of data are used effectively to set targets and raise the standard of attainment. The marking of students' work is thorough with good guidelines given for improvement.

Religious education

Provision for religious education is overall **unsatisfactory**, but provision for the examination course is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students who do not follow an examination course in religious studies have insufficient time to gain a meaningful experience of religious education in line with the requirements of the Locally Agreed Syllabus.
- In 2004 A-level GCE examination results were above the national average.
- In examination groups, teachers use good subject knowledge and relevant examples to develop understanding and raise standards.
- Relationships between teachers and students in examination groups are very positive, encouraging students to explore difficult concepts and develop understanding.

Commentary

224. For students who do not follow an examination course there is insufficient time to meet the requirements of the Locally Agreed Syllabus post 16, and therefore standards for these students are below expectations. In the 2004 A-level examination, results were above the national average in both A to B and A to E grades, which demonstrates good achievement. At AS level, examination results were below the national average both at the higher grades and at grades A to E. The number of entries in the subject is too small to give a clear picture of trends over time.
225. In examination groups the standards seen are above expectations, and they achieve well. Students have a good understanding of the key concepts and show skill in the use of technical language. They debate issues such as the divine command theory with confidence, offering reasoned arguments and examples from their own experience to support their views. They are able to compare and contrast the verification principle of Ayer with the falsification principle of Flew, and to interpret Wisdom's parable of the gardener. Students make links between the two courses of study and are able to review the bigger picture, reflecting on meta-ethics. All students, including those with special educational needs, make good progress. Teachers have high expectations and this is reflected in the high aspirations of students.
226. Teaching and learning are good. Teachers use their good subject knowledge to make difficult concepts accessible, drawing on contemporary and relevant examples to illustrate their teaching and to develop deeper understanding in the students. Students have confidence in their teachers and good relationships have been developed. Good use of praise encourages students to try out ideas and explore concepts in order to consolidate their learning. Thorough planning with clear objectives means that lessons flow well and pupils understand what is expected. Resources are well chosen and relevant. ICT, and in particular the Internet, is used appropriately to support extended essay work. A range of teaching styles is used but opportunities are missed to raise standards using a more varied approach.
227. Leadership and management are good. The subject leader is committed to the further development of examination groups. At AS and A-level the status of the subject has been raised and the department has had particular success in attracting boys to the subject. Students are appreciative of the help and support they are given. There is good liaison between members of the department supporting informal monitoring and evaluation. Senior managers and the governors are aware of the unsatisfactory provision for students who are not part of an examination group and there is a vision for improvement.
228. The school remains non-compliant in relation to its statutory requirements and therefore improvement since the last inspection is unsatisfactory. Progress in relation to examination provision is satisfactory.

ENGINEERING, TECHNOLOGY AND MANUFACTURING

Design and technology

Provision for design and technology in the sixth form is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is strong leadership and management.
- The teachers have excellent subject knowledge.
- There are high standards and students make very good progress from their GCSE courses.
- Students' have very positive attitudes, which supports their learning very well.
- Very effective use is made of ICT.

Commentary

229. Standards in the 2004 A-level GCE examinations was around the national average for both product design and food technology. In the AS level product design it was well above average. In the present classes seen the students' attainment is well above the national expectation. Students make very good progress and achieve very well, gaining higher grades in design and technology than in their other subjects. AS and A-level design folders are well developed and make very effective use of ICT. Examples include research, data analysis, modelling and presentation.
230. The quality of teaching and learning is very good. Teachers have excellent subject knowledge, they plan in detail and support students very well. Teachers and pupils work together to develop ideas and create well thought out products. For example, a student working on an electronic light dimmer was able to explain in detail the technical merits of a voltage regulator. This demonstrated excellent technical understanding and the use of mathematical skills to apply scientific understanding.
231. Courses in the sixth form are well organised and a range of initiatives are introduced to motivate students and extend their experiences. The subject is adequately resourced with the exception of larger computer aided manufacture equipment. The lack of a high speed router or laser cutter is limiting the range of projects open to students. Technical support is very effective freeing teachers to concentrate on monitoring students and making sure they target work to gain the highest grade.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

The main focus of the inspection was on art and design and drama. Music was sampled.

Art and design

Provision for art and design is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards at A-level are above the national average.
- Students are confident artists using a range of media to express their ideas.
- The opportunities for students to explore, experiment and express themselves in both two and three dimensions are too few.
- The lack of dedicated working space and storage limits opportunities for independent working.

Commentary

232. Results at A-level GCE examinations were just above the national average in 2004, but are well above for those students attaining the higher grades, A and B. These results have been above the national average since the last inspection. Students studying AS levels attain standards around the national average, and many carry on to A-level.
233. Standards seen in class are above the national expectation. Progress and achievement are both good. Students in Year 13 show good levels of skill, knowledge and understanding which they use to develop their ideas using a familiar range of

media and materials that are sometimes combined to create low relief pieces and paintings or mixed media studies. The work is interesting and well executed. In Year 12 the use of their sketchbooks is much more developed than in the GCSE classes, and they are used to better effect to investigate and explore ideas. The use of sketchbooks has now become a more significant feature in their work in art and design. Consequently students have a more secure knowledge and understanding of the application of a familiar range of media, materials, equipment, and the ideas and approaches of the work of other artists.

234. However, the opportunities for students to explore, experiment and express themselves in both two and three dimensions are still too few. The breadth of practical exploration, experimentation, investigation and expression needs to be developed further for this to significantly impact upon higher standards and higher levels of achievement at this key stage.
235. The quality of teaching and learning in the sixth form is good. This is the result of teaching that is based upon a good level of subject knowledge and expertise. This has an impact upon standards and achievement. Students are encouraged to work independently but they regularly discuss their work with the teacher, sharing ideas and potential areas for research. Consequently, the work in Years 12 and 13 is more inventive and imaginative. Moreover, students are able to make choices and decisions about their work with increasing independence and confidence.
236. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The sharing and delegation of responsibilities is a good feature in the department. This ensures that students benefit from contact with the different specialisms that the department is able to provide.
237. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory. Sketchbooks are now in place, but the breadth of practical exploration, experimentation, investigation and expression has yet to significantly impact upon students' creative output and standards. There is not enough use of ICT and staff expertise is still not good enough. Learning objectives still lack clarity and are still being confused with lesson activities.

Performing arts

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards seen are well above average for AS and A-level students. Students produce very good practical work and their folders and coursework show very good achievement.
- Teaching is very good. The three teachers in the department are specialists and use their expertise very well.
- Students' attitudes to their work are very good and this contributes to their very good learning. They are independent and well organised.
- There has been good improvement since the last inspection.

Commentary

238. Standards were around national averages in the AS and A-level GCE examinations in 2004. Students achievement is good; they gain grades that are usually higher than those in other

subjects. The students progress very well from their GCSE courses in drama, and both male and female students achieve equally well. Standards seen in lessons and coursework are well above average, and they are achieving very well. All students produce and develop a very good level of practical work, such as the piece for the National Theatre Drama Festival in Year 12, and the improvisations for public performance in Year 13, although the latter were compromised by the absence of one teacher. This practical work is backed up with extensive research and evaluation, linked directly to the assessment objectives of the examination. Students are using their language and ICT skills well to review and analyse their practical work, and are using music and sound technology very well to support it.

239. Teaching and learning are very good. The teachers challenge and motivate the students very well. These teachers are enthusiastic, work well as a team and have very high expectations of the students. There is a clear focus on developing students' skills, and channelling their energies towards the examination requirements. The teachers know the students well and are able to support them as individuals. Lessons and projects are planned in detail and are delivered expertly by subject specialists.
240. Students' attitudes are very good, as they were in the last inspection. They are independent and well organised, work effectively in groups and concentrate very well, which means that their learning is also very good. They are conscientious in completing their work and give up time to complete projects and performances outside school. Assessment is very good and used very well to set targets, inform students of their achievement and guide them as to what to do to improve. The marking is detailed and regular, with constructive comments and clear links to the assessment objectives of the course.
241. Leadership and management are very good, which is much better than at the time of the last inspection. A very effective team has been put together. Teachers use their specialist knowledge well to devise lessons and projects. Monitoring of the results, analysing data and devising strategies for improvement are extremely well developed. A wide range of visits and performances are arranged. Visiting performers enhance the provision. The main studio is a good space for teaching, and has very good facilities for lighting and sound. Other drama rooms are used effectively for specialist tuition, and the main school stage is a good space for productions. The students are closely involved in the annual school performances of musicals, and put on performances as part of their course.

Music in the sixth form was sampled

242. The attainment of the small group of pupils taking A-level music in Year 13 is well above average. Teaching is good although a lack of strategies for engaging pupils in their learning means that their response to set tasks sometimes lacks commitment.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

Sports studies

Provision in sports studies is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Results in the advanced level GCE examinations are above the national average.

- Students achieve well because of good teaching.
- Students' very good attitudes to their work enhance their learning.
- Marking does not help students to improve their standards.

Commentary

243. Results at A-level GCE were above average in 2004 and all students achieved at least a pass. Considering their prior attainment at GCSE these students achieved well. In the lessons observed and the scrutiny of students' work in Years 12 and 13, standards are average at present and students are still achieving well. The presentation of written work varies, but students' personal studies are of a high quality, well presented with very good use of word processing skills.
244. In Year 13 students know the effects of exercise, both long and short term, on the body. They relate this to training but are unable to recall previous learning, such as carbohydrates producing glycogen for energy. In Year 12 students know the class of levers, for example in a press up, that produce the movement. Their knowledge of the physiological aspects of training is good, but they are reluctant to enter into discussion with confidence.
245. Teaching and learning are good. Teachers use their good subject knowledge well to enthuse and inform students. Lesson planning is good and some teachers use the interactive whiteboard to enhance their presentation. Marking is not regular enough and is not graded to support students, who do not know the progress they are making. There are few comments to show students how to improve. Good leadership and management motivates teachers and students to raise standards, and examination results have improved since the previous inspection. Teachers' expertise is used effectively and the number of students studying the AS and A-level currently has increased.
246. The very good attitudes of students to their work and the very good relationships with teachers help lessons to progress at a good pace. Extra-curricular activities are available for all students, but few take advantage of them. There is little opportunity for students to take part in sporting activities, as there is no time available during the week in curriculum time. Improvement overall has been good.

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

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