

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **ST JOHN'S CATHOLIC COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOL**

Gravesend

LEA area: Kent

Unique reference number: 118933

Headteacher: Mr J Stanley

Lead inspector: WJ Powell

Dates of inspection: 7 - 10 March 2005

Inspection number: 268925

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

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#### **Terms used in this report**

*Pupils in Years 7 to 9 are at **Key Stage 3**, having transferred in most cases from their primary schools at the end of **Key Stage 2** after Year 6. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 are at **Key Stage 4** of their education. Those students who remain at school after the compulsory period of education are in the **sixth form**, in Years 12 and 13. Pupils in Years 7 to 11 follow courses and programmes of study set out in the National Curriculum. A course of religious education is a requirement for pupils and students of all ages at school.*

*At the end of Year 9, pupils aged 14 take national tests in the **core subjects** of English, mathematics and science. In all subjects of the National Curriculum, teachers also make their own assessments of what the pupils know, understand and can do at age 14. At the end of Year 11, pupils aged 16 may take examinations in the General Certificate of Secondary Education (**GCSE**). Others may follow courses leading to the award of the General National Vocational Qualification (**GNVQ**) or the National Vocational Qualification (**NVQ**). Sixth form students may take further courses leading to these awards, including the Advanced Vocational Certificate of Education (**AVCE**), or to those of the General Certificate of Education at Advanced level (**A-level**). Students may take examinations leading to the Advanced Subsidiary award (**AS**), equivalent to half the difficulty of the full A-level, which is gained by further study beyond AS standard. Some students may also take Advanced Extension Awards (**AEA**).*

*Inspectors judge the **standards** reached by pupils by comparing their attainments with national test and examination results, or by the levels of performance expected for pupils of the same age nationally. The pupils' **achievements** reflect whether they are doing well enough. These judgements take account of the educational **value added** over time. In this report, **similar schools** are defined as those having similar standards at the start of each stage of learning.*

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Comprehensive  
School category: Voluntary aided  
Age range of pupils: 11 - 18  
Sex of pupils: Mixed  
Number on roll: 1108

School address: Rochester Road  
Gravesend  
Postcode: DA12 2JW

Telephone number: 01474 534718  
Fax number: 01474 563763

Appropriate authority: Governing body  
Name of chair of Fr P Gilbert  
governors:

Date of previous 3 February 2003  
inspection:

## CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

This mixed voluntary aided Roman Catholic comprehensive school is located in Gravesend in Kent, and has 1108 pupils, including 181 sixth form students; these are average figures. The school received a Schools Achievement Award in 2001. The school serves an area that has an above average level of deprivation. It is popular, and draws its pupils from over 30 primary schools in the area. Standards at entry to the main school are broadly average overall; they are below average at entry to the sixth form. The majority of the school's pupils are white British, but there are significant minorities of pupils with Asian or Asian-British backgrounds, or from non-British white origins. Almost a quarter of the pupils has English at an early stage of acquisition; the main language used at home is Panjabi. The proportion of pupils identified as having special educational needs is above average; the proportion of them having a Statement of Special Educational Needs is average. The majority of the pupils identified as having needs at the School Action Plus stage or above have specific learning needs, or are supported for social, emotional, and behavioural reasons. Four pupils are asylum seekers; none comes from a traveller background. The proportion of pupils joining or leaving the school other than at the usual times is average, and is not a major factor in its work. The school has problems in recruiting suitable staff. At the time of the inspection, two teachers were on temporary contracts and two posts were unfilled, and several cases of long-term absence were covered by temporary and supply staff. When inspected in 2003, the school was judged to be underachieving; it was visited by Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) to check on progress in May 2004.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
3174	W J Powell	Lead inspector	
11575	C Fish	Lay inspector	
15849	P Buzzing	Team inspector	English 16+
11508	C Griffin	Team inspector	English 11-16
3643	D Jones	Team inspector	Mathematics 11-18
22691	R Woodhouse	Team inspector	Science 11-16; physics 16+
32861	G Hartle	Team inspector	Design and technology 11-18
32785	W Allt	Team inspector	Information and communication technology 11-18
21975	A King	Team inspector	Modern languages 11-16
2740	B Barratt	Team inspector	History 11-16; special educational needs; psychology 16+
32178	J Shears	Team inspector	Geography 11-16; business education 14-16
10759	L Bappa	Team inspector	Citizenship 11-16
10053	J Simms	Team inspector	Art and design 11-18, English as an additional language
31673	D Gwyer-Roberts	Team inspector	Music 11-16
22590	R Castle	Team inspector	Physical education 11-16; leisure and tourism 16+

The inspection contractor was:

Serco QAA  
Herringston Barn  
Herringston  
Dorchester  
Dorset  
DT2 9PU

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## PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

### OVERALL EVALUATION

This is a school in a state of transition following the judgement of underachievement when it was inspected in February 2003. Now, **the overall effectiveness of the school is satisfactory**. Standards have improved and the proportion of teaching that is good or better has increased substantially. Standards in the arts are high. There have been substantial changes to the governance, leadership, and management of the school. The full impact of these has yet to be felt, but already, there has been substantial progress on many important matters. However, the personal development of pupils lags behind their improved academic outcomes, particularly in Years 7 and 8. The value for money provided by the school, including the sixth form, is satisfactory.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The school has improved the pupils' achievements markedly since 2003, and it now does better than similar schools at examination.
- The proportion of teaching that is good or better has been improved by a sharp focus on teaching and assessment.
- The revised arrangements for the school's governance and leadership are making the school a much more self-critical one.
- Pupils who have special educational needs, and those with English as an additional language, do well.
- Work in art and design, and in music, is of high quality.
- Unsatisfactory behaviour, including some bullying, has an adverse effect on achievement in Years 7 and 8, compounded by inflexible grouping arrangements and some weak teaching.
- Some aspects of work in ICT, physical education and geography in the main school could be improved.
- Pastoral care, and links with the wider community, are good, but pupils could be more involved in the running of the school.

The school has made good progress since the previous inspection. After a slow start, major changes were made to how the governing body and senior managers worked. The resulting focus on assessment, and on teaching and learning, has removed much, though not all, of the underachievement noted in 2003. Standards and achievement have risen significantly. The school is now more self-critical, with far more monitoring of how well it is doing. Literacy is better developed, and the school has made good progress in implementing national strategy programmes. The curriculum still needs attention, particularly in Years 7 to 9, and ICT is not yet fully embedded, although there has been substantial investment in the subject since 2003.

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

**Achievement is good overall.** Although some pockets of underachievement remain, the overall picture is now much improved on that in 2003. In the national tests at the end of Year 9, results have been rising, and in 2003 and 2004, they were well above average overall compared to all schools, and in line with the average for similar schools. Achievement is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9, and good in other years, including the sixth form. Standards seen during the inspection are average in Year 9 and in the sixth form, but above average in Year 11. Pupils achieve particularly well in art and design and in music. Achievement is satisfactory in science, good in mathematics and in Years 10 and 11 in English, and very good in Years 7 to 9 in English. However, there are areas of underachievement in ICT and geography in the main school, and psychology in the sixth form. Years 7 and 8 show too many cases of underachievement in lessons.

**The pupils' personal qualities, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are satisfactory overall.** Attendance is good, and attitudes are satisfactory overall, as is behaviour amongst older pupils. However, behaviour, including cases of bullying, is unsatisfactory in Years 7 and 8, and this sometimes has an adverse effect on work in lessons. Spiritual development is good, although other areas of personal development could be planned more carefully.

## **QUALITY OF EDUCATION**

**The quality of education is satisfactory overall. The overall quality of teaching is good,** although only satisfactory in Years 7 and 8 because some teachers, often supply or temporary staff, have problems in managing classes. In general, much more teaching is now good or better than in 2003. Partnerships with the community, assessment, and the school's pastoral care, are all good. The curriculum is satisfactory overall, but with unsatisfactory features in Years 7 to 9 which contribute to the problems in Years 7 and 8. Accommodation and resources are satisfactory, as are partnerships with other schools and with parents.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

**The quality of leadership and management is good overall.** The governance of the school is good, and the school now meets almost all statutory requirements; ICT does not fully meet National Curriculum requirements. Leadership is good; the new headteacher has articulated a very clear vision for the school, and changes to senior management have begun to have a significant effect on how the school runs. The school is managed well, with frequent monitoring and analyses of its effectiveness.

## **PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL**

Parents are generally satisfied with the school, but their concerns over behaviour and how they are consulted have foundation. Similarly, pupils and students expressed general satisfaction with many aspects of the school, but they had significant concerns about behaviour and bullying, and about how little, to date, they have been involved as partners in the school and its work. These concerns are justified.

## **IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED**

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

- Raise the level of achievement in Years 7 to 9 by eradicating unsatisfactory teaching, especially in Years 7 and 8.
  - Work hard to eliminate bullying from the school, and to improve behaviour in lessons and about the school, especially in Years 7 and 8.
  - Ensure that the grouping arrangements in Years 7 to 9 provide much greater flexibility to match teaching to a pupil's needs.
  - Improve the provision in ICT in Years 7 to 11, in geography and core physical education in Years 10 and 11, and in psychology in the sixth form, so that pupils and students achieve appropriately.
  - Involve pupils much more in the school's decision making, and in its life and work.
- and, to meet statutory requirements:
- Ensure that the National Curriculum programmes of study for ICT are met in full.

### **THE SIXTH FORM AT ST JOHN'S CATHOLIC COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOL**

#### **OVERALL EVALUATION**

**The overall effectiveness of the sixth form is satisfactory.** Although some groups are small, good teaching results in good achievement for students. Standards have risen, mainly because female students' results have improved in recent years. The sixth form is well led, and students are well looked after. The sixth form is cost effective.

The main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Students tend to do better than would be expected from their often limited GCSE results.
- Many students are the first in their families to undertake continuing education, and they receive good support and guidance in doing so.
- Although students enjoy taking on responsibility within the sixth form, they are not particularly active in the wider life and work of the school; in some classes, they have inadequate opportunities to display initiative.
- The sixth form is well led, and the students' progress is carefully monitored against targets at regular intervals.
- Achievement in psychology should be higher.

#### **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 in depth.

<b>Curriculum area</b>	<b>Evaluation</b>
English, languages and communication	<b>Good in English literature.</b> Students achieve well because of good teaching, and effective tracking that makes good use of assessment data. Learning could be more independent, however.
Mathematics	<b>Good in mathematics.</b> Standards are average and rising. Teaching and learning are good so students achieve well. Some could contribute more in lessons. Leadership and management are good.
Science	<b>Very good in physics.</b> Students are very enthusiastic and work hard, gaining better grades than expected, thanks to teaching that is often good.
Information and communication technology	<b>Good in ICT.</b> The teachers' very good subject and course knowledge, coupled with excellent resources, leads to very good achievement.



Humanities	<b>Unsatisfactory in psychology.</b> Not enough attention is paid to monitoring how well students should be doing, and the subject lacks clear leadership.
Engineering, technology and manufacturing	<b>Good in home economics.</b> Assessment is well used to target work, and show where improvement is possible, but some teaching could involve students more fully.
Visual and performing arts and media	<b>Excellent in art.</b> There are high levels of achievement because of the rigorous way in which the course is planned and delivered by a team of skilled teachers. The students' work is innovative and exciting.
Hospitality, sports, leisure and travel	<b>Good in vocational leisure and tourism.</b> The programme is well matched to the students' needs, and uses ICT well to support learning. The one year course offers a good stepping stone to further study.

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*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**

Students receive good quality guidance and support, backed by the school's good assessment and monitoring systems. This is particularly valuable to the many students who are the first in their families to aspire to higher education.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE SIXTH FORM**

**The leadership and management of the sixth form are good.** Although many courses are small, the school is working with others to provide more cost effective ways of delivering courses. The governors are well informed about sixth form matters, and the area is well led by an effective team. Monitoring is effective in highlighting areas for improvement.

## **STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM**

Students are generally positive about the sixth form, and enjoy the more relaxed way that they are treated. They see the teaching as good, and support as effective. These are all confirmed by the inspection. Students would like to be more involved with the school's work and many of them felt that there is too much misbehaviour amongst the younger pupils in the school. Inspectors agree.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS**

### **STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS**

#### **Standards achieved in subjects and courses**

*Achievement is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9, but good in Years 10 and 11, and in the sixth form. Overall, standards are average in Year 9, above average in Year 11, and average in the sixth form.*

#### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The school has done a great deal of work on teaching and assessment since 2003 in order to minimise underachievement.
- Although most lessons in Years 7 and 8 show at least good achievement, a significant minority still shows underachievement because of grouping and teaching shortcomings.
- Overall, pupils are now doing better than would be expected across the five years that they are in the school.
- Art and design, and music, are well placed to show the school how to raise standards and promote high achievement.
- Aspects of achievement in ICT, geography and core physical education are still capable of improvement.
- Pupils with special educational needs and those learning English as an additional language do well in all years, including Years 7 and 8, because of generally good support.

#### **Commentary**

##### ***Main school***

1. When pupils enter the school in Year 7, their standards are broadly average overall, although the most recent entry was of a slightly lower standard than that in other years. Entry standards vary somewhat from subject to subject, reflecting the diversity of experience that pupils have in the many primary schools feeding St John's.

##### ***Standards in national tests at the end of Year 9 – average point scores in 2004 (provisional)***

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	35.6 (35.8)	33.6 (33.4)
mathematics	36.9 (37.4)	35.6 (35.4)
science	35.2 (36.0)	33.2 (33.6)

*There were 183 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year*

2. In recent years, the trend in national tests, taken at the end of Year 9, has been rising broadly in line with the national picture, but with marked variation in some years, mainly because of variations in the English results. In 2003, the latest year for which validated national data are available, results were well above the average for all schools in English and science, and above average in mathematics; overall, they were well above average. In comparison with similar schools, results were above average in

English, average in science, but below average in mathematics; overall, they were average. In 2004, provisional figures, based on the school's own data, show a similar pattern to those of 2003 in relation to all schools and to similar schools. The 2004 results exceeded the school's targets. When results are compared with the same pupils' Year 6 test scores three years earlier, they show that they have done better than would be expected in both 2003 and 2004. This represents good achievement in Years 7 to 9 in the core subjects for the years in question. Boys tend to do better than their peers nationally by a wider margin than is seen for girls.

3. In work seen, achievement in Years 7 to 9 is satisfactory overall. Although achievement was good or better in some two-thirds of lessons seen, it was unsatisfactory in a significant minority of cases. This was mainly because of shortcomings in the grouping arrangements in these years, and in the management of behaviour, often by less experienced, temporary or supply staff, who tend to be concentrated at this level of the school at present. A scrutiny of the pupils' written work shows a rather better picture over the longer term, but for now, standards overall are average in Year 9. Achievement at this level is very good in English, art and design, and in music. It is good in mathematics, history, and in design and technology, but is unsatisfactory in ICT, where improvements to equipment and staffing are too recent to have overcome earlier deficiencies. Elsewhere achievement is satisfactory, including science. This is a better picture than in 2003, because of the considerable work that has gone into improving teaching and learning, and particularly the use of assessment. There is now markedly less underachievement amongst higher attainers.

**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	54 (51)	52 (52)
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	94 (95)	89 (88)
Percentage of pupils gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	98 (97)	96 (96)
Average point score per pupil (best eight subjects)	36.9 (35.2)	34.9 (34.7)

*There were 175 pupils in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.*

4. The trend in examination results at the end of Year 11 in recent years has been rising at a broadly similar rate to that seen nationally, but as in the Year 9 tests, there are variations from year to year. In 2004, the overall results were above the average for all schools nationally, and that for similar schools. In relation to the pupils' Year 9 test scores in 2002, their GCSE results were better than expected; in relation to their standards at entry in 1999, results were as expected. This picture reflects the below average progress that these pupils made in their first three years in the school.
5. Boys and girls performed differently at GCSE. Over the past three years, boys' results were above those for boys nationally, whereas girls did as well as girls elsewhere. The gap was even wider in 2004, with boys' results well above average. In 2004, their combined results were significantly above average in art and design, mathematics and music, but below average in design and technology, English literature, and in history. When individuals' results are analysed, pupils - particularly boys - tended to do significantly better in science than in the other subjects that they took. However, pupils did significantly less well in design and technology, English literature, and in geography.

6. In work seen during the inspection, achievement in Years 10 and 11 is good overall, with almost all lessons showing at least satisfactory achievement, and some two-thirds having good or better achievement. Discussions with pupils and work scrutinies confirm this picture. Achievement is excellent in art and design, and very good in music. Achievement is good in English, mathematics, and in design and technology. It is satisfactory in most other subjects, including science. However, achievement is unsatisfactory in ICT for similar reasons to those seen in Years 7 to 9, and in geography because of weaknesses in teaching and the planning of the course. Core physical education shows unsatisfactory achievement because of the very limited time allocated to this course. As in the lower part of the school, consistency of achievement is now more evident than in 2003.
7. Across the school, standards of literacy are above average, with good progress being made in developing writing and reading. The school has made significant improvements to the way in which literacy is developed since the previous inspection. Numeracy standards are also above average, and most subjects now provide appropriate opportunities for pupils to use, and to enhance, their mathematical skills. Competence in ICT is below average. Improvements to the numbers of computers, and very recent work to enhance programmes, have improved matters since the previous inspection, but do not go far enough. Many subjects have inadequate access to ICT to support learning, and planning for experience in ICT across subjects still lacks coherence.
8. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well at all levels. They make good progress in reaching their individual targets, and in improving their confidence and self-esteem as learners. Their progress is carefully monitored, and they achieve well in National Curriculum assessments at the end of Year 9, and in GCSE. Many achieve better at GCSE than other pupils in the light of their earlier attainment. They make good progress in most subjects, and very good progress in art, music and in English in Years 7 to 9.
9. The school's own analyses show that the standards of pupils with English as an additional language are lower than those of their peers when they enter the school in Year 7. This difference lessens as they move through the school. They achieve well, thanks to well targeted support, particularly by language support assistants, so that their standards in Year 9 are only slightly behind those of their white British peers. By Year 11, they are slightly ahead of them. Pupils who enter the school at a later stage, sometimes as refugees for instance, also do well.

### **Sixth form**

10. Standards at entry to the sixth form are below average for sixth forms nationally, both in overall terms, and in the grades required to study specific subjects. In some cases, students with weak GCSEs follow advanced courses after a one-year course leading to Level 2 qualifications such as Intermediate GNVQ.

#### **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	93.9 (93.7)	92.3 (92.3)
Percentage of entries gaining A-B grades	34.6 (28.1)	36.2 (35.6)
Average point score per pupil	247.4 (224.7)	265.2 (258.2)

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*There were 72 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year*

11. Examination results have risen sharply over the last three years, rising to average in 2004, mainly because of an improvement in female students' results, which were well below average in 2002, but are now, as with males, at average levels. In 2004, results were well above average in religious education, and in art and design at A-level, and in vocational ICT. They were above average in vocational business studies, but significantly below average in drama, English literature, general studies, history, mathematics, physics, and psychology. In other subjects, they were broadly average.
12. In work seen in the sixth form, achievement in Years 12 and 13 is good overall; for some individuals, achievement is very good or excellent in relation to their low GCSE profiles. Standards of work seen are broadly average overall. Achievement is very good in art and design, and in ICT. It is unsatisfactory in psychology because teaching does not lay a sufficiently secure base for learning. In the other focus subjects, achievement is good. In work seen, there is relatively little difference in the standards reached by male and female students, reflecting the narrowing of the performance gap in recent examinations. As in the main school, students with special educational needs, or with English as an additional language, receive good support and achieve well. The school uses educational maintenance grants well to promote access to sixth form courses, and thus to promote achievement by less advantaged students.
13. Although the school does not offer structured key skills programmes, standards of communication skills are satisfactory amongst sixth formers, many of whom come from homes where English is not the first language. Whilst reading and writing skills are generally secure, students are not always effective in oral work in lessons. In part, this reflects a lack of opportunities for them to take part in discussions; much work in class is still over-managed by teachers. Skills of application of number are good. The successful re-sit GCSE course in mathematics provides a good foundation of basic skills in the application of number. Most subjects also provide good opportunities for students to use these skills to support learning. The students' ICT skills are good. The main ICT resources are close to the sixth form area, and students take the opportunity to use the facilities to support independent learning. In most subjects, ICT is being used appropriately to extend learning.

### **Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities**

*Pupils' attitudes to school life are satisfactory, whilst those of sixth form students are good. Behaviour is unsatisfactory overall, because of weaknesses in Years 7 and 8. Attendance and punctuality are good. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory overall.*

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Most pupils enjoy school and what it offers them.
- Behaviour improves as the pupils progress through the school; sixth formers behave well and are positive about school.
- Pupils' concerns about bullying and other forms of harassment are not always taken seriously enough.
- Whilst spiritual development is good, other aspects of the pupils' personal development are still not being planned for well enough. They have too few opportunities to exercise responsibility, or to play an active part in the school's life and work.

## Commentary

### Main school

14. Whilst many pupils like coming to school they have two very important concerns. They feel the behaviour of a number of pupils is unacceptable on too many occasions, leading to too much bullying, including some racial harassment. Inspectors agree with these views. Both these aspects have deteriorated since the previous inspection.
15. The pupils' attitudes to school and what it offers are satisfactory in the main school. Most co-operate willingly with teachers, and take part in activities outside the classroom with enthusiasm. Pupils have satisfactory relationships with staff and their peers, particularly at an individual level. When given the opportunity, the pupils willingly take on responsibility and show enterprise. For example, they organise the appointments for their parents with teachers at parents' evening, and help to ensure the smooth running of the school by undertaking tasks as requested. Given the right situations, pupils show confidence, maturity and self-esteem. They were unfailingly polite, friendly and helpful towards inspectors, for example. Pupils with special educational needs respond well to specialist support in lessons. They work with pride and grow in confidence and self-esteem. Most behave well.
16. Whilst behaviour is usually at least satisfactory in Years 9 to 11, the overall quality of behaviour is unsatisfactory in Years 7 and 8; this makes behaviour in the main school unsatisfactory overall. In most lessons, the behaviour and attitudes of the pupils are good, even when the quality of teaching is less than dynamic. Indeed, many lessons succeed because the pupils behave well and are tolerant of indifferent lesson content and delivery. However, a significant minority of other lessons, mostly in Years 7 and 8, are marred for the majority of pupils because a small number persist in low-level disruptive activities, which have an adverse effect on everyone's learning. Outside lessons, most pupils behave well and show good levels of self-control and calm. However, during the inspection, inspectors saw numerous cases of unsatisfactory behaviour during breaks and lesson changes, again, especially amongst pupils in Years 7 and 8. The school has recognised there is a problem with behaviour amongst its younger pupils; the governors and senior managers are currently looking at the problem. However, as yet, pupils have not been involved in seeking solutions. Fixed term exclusions are used in a generally appropriate manner, but the level is still relatively high in relation to similar schools. The level of permanent exclusions is about the same as elsewhere. The procedures for handling exclusions have been tightened recently.

### *Ethnic background of pupils*

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

### *Exclusions in the last school year*

No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
622	90	3
11	0	0
30	8	0
9	0	0
4	0	0
4	0	0

Mixed – any other mixed background	13	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Indian	86	7	0
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani	5	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	3	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	8	3	0
Black or Black British – African	5	0	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	2	0	0
Any other ethnic group	20	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	286	29	0

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

17. A substantial proportion of the pupils, students and parents who responded to the inspection survey expressed concerns about bullying and other forms of harassment in the main school. Inspectors took great care to establish the extent of this through widespread formal and informal discussions. Although most pupils know what they should do if they are harassed in any way, their concerns revolve around the outcome of any reporting of incidents. Many cases are handled well, and result in very positive outcomes, especially if brought to the school's attention by parents. However, too many pupils complain that their reports are not taken seriously enough. For example, the number of incidents of racial taunting reported to the local authority does not appear to tally with the pupils' own perceptions of the problem. This has led to pupils becoming accepting of bullying or harassment, rather than reporting it.
18. Figures for last year show that attendance is about average; those for the first term of this year show that attendance has risen considerably. The school has good procedures to encourage pupils to come to school, including making it competitive within and between years. The new educational welfare officer visits the school regularly, taking on those cases that require further investigation. Information about the achievement of those pupils with low attendance rates is monitored regularly by heads of years, and the data given to parents to emphasise the connection between attendance and achievement. Governors and senior managers are determined to ensure that attendance levels are improved further, as a key part of their work to raise standards.

**Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%) 2003/4**

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	6.9	School data	0.8
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.*

19. Provision for pupils' spiritual development is planned, coherent and inclusive. The school's Roman Catholic ethos underpins its work on supporting pupils' spiritual development. All pupils take part in a daily act of collective worship. They clearly value this provision. There are many opportunities for them to reflect on issues and to express feelings of compassion and concern. The school chaplain and local clergy are highly active members of both the school and the local community. Therefore, pupils are learning to be reflective, can clearly think beyond the material world and show respect for fellow members of their community. The school works very hard to ensure

that pupils from other faiths are valued and treated as equal members of the community. Sikh prayers, for example, are included in some acts of worship and messages are sent to the local mosque when the Muslim festival of Eid is celebrated. Because of this very good provision, pupils are genuinely reflective, can clearly think beyond the material world and show respect and tolerance for all members of their community. During the week of the inspection, for example, GCSE history pupils listened to a talk from a survivor of the Nazi Holocaust and were clearly moved by what he had to say.

20. Planning for other aspects of pupils' personal development, however, lacks coherence and doesn't always fully involve pupils or have entirely positive outcomes. The good practice evident in several subjects is not being replicated elsewhere. For example, art lessons make an excellent contribution to both pupils' spiritual and cultural development. Events such as multi-cultural day also make a positive contribution towards this aspect of pupils' personal development. There are similar concerns over the need to improve planning for pupils' moral and social development. Pupils work together well in many lessons and show respect and a clear understanding of what is right and wrong. They have some opportunities to exercise responsibility in many areas of school life, although they are not always clear about how these change with age and maturity. Pupils drop large amounts of litter during break and lunchtimes, and they are rarely challenged when they do this.

### **Sixth form**

21. Students choose to stay at the school for their sixth form studies because they like it, feel supported by staff, and think they will do well here, thus they attend well. Course completion rates are generally high. Students understand the need for regular attendance to ensure they cover the amount of work they need to. The school has the same attitude to attendance amongst its students as to the pupils in the main school, emphasising the link between attendance and achievement.
22. Students have mature attitudes to their lessons and appreciate the more relaxed approach from and relationships with teachers. Most have clear ideas of what they want to do and they work hard to obtain the qualifications required. Students are willing to take on responsibility within the sixth form, although there is more of a reluctance to become involved with the rest of the school. Some train to be 'Befrienders', who support younger pupils experiencing difficulties with school life. Behaviour in the sixth form is good, but students were concerned at the amount of unsatisfactory behaviour amongst younger pupils.
23. Personal development continues to be satisfactory overall for students in the sixth form, although spiritual development continues to be very good.

### **QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL**

*The quality of education provided is satisfactory overall. Teaching and learning are good overall, as are the school's arrangements for the care and guidance of pupils. Partnerships with the wider community are good, whilst the curriculum, partnership with other schools, and with parents, are satisfactory.*

### **Teaching and learning**



*The overall quality of teaching and learning is good, although weaknesses in important areas in Years 7 and 8 mean that, here, it is no more than satisfactory. Assessment is good.*

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The overall quality of teaching has improved since the previous inspection, with much more being good or better.
- Art and music contain a high proportion of teaching that is very good or better.
- Too many lessons in Years 7 and 8 show weaknesses in teaching and learning.
- The school has made considerable progress with assessment, which now contributes well to better achievement.
- A clear focus on improving approaches to teaching and learning means that most pupils now have their needs met.

### **Commentary**

#### **Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 153 lessons**

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
9 (5.9%)	33 (21.6%)	61 (39.9%)	35 (22.9 %)	13 (8.5%)	2 (1.3%)	Nil

*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.*

### **Main school**

24. This is a school where the quality of teaching is polarised. The overall quality of teaching and learning has risen since the previous inspection. Then, less than half of the teaching was good or better; now, the figure is two-thirds. However, the proportion of teaching that is less than satisfactory, at almost one lesson in ten, is similar to the 2003 figure. There are marked differences between the different stages of the school. In Years 7 to 9, teaching in almost one lesson in five is unsatisfactory, a level similar to that seen in the 1997 inspection, but which was lower in 2003. However, in these years, and in Years 10 and 11, almost two-thirds of teaching is at least good, with over a quarter being very good or excellent. The proportion of unsatisfactory or poor teaching in Years 10 and 11 is broadly similar to the national level. Teaching in Years 10 and 11 is therefore good, resulting in good learning and good achievement. The level of weak teaching in Years 7 to 8 detracts from the otherwise good, and improved, picture at this level, so that here, teaching and learning are only satisfactory.
25. Within subjects, teaching is excellent at all levels in art and design; it is very good at all levels in music. Satisfactory teaching occurs at all levels in modern languages, science, and physical education, as well as in Years 7 to 9 in geography. Elsewhere, including in English and mathematics, teaching is good, apart from geography in Years 10 and 11, where teaching is unsatisfactory. It is also unsatisfactory at all levels in ICT. Although ICT teaching in lessons seen during the inspection was at least good, discussions with pupils and work scrutinies showed that this was a very recent change.
26. Since the previous inspection, the school has raised the profile of teaching and learning as the core activities of the school, and this is overseen well by one of the assistant headteachers. Much effort has gone into ensuring that the national strategies for improvement are now being reflected in classroom work. In most cases, there has

been a good start to this, although mundane announcements via a loudspeaker system cut across, say, work in a tutor period, still making the statement that administration is more important than learning. Pupils and most parents regard teaching as one of the school's strengths, although parents were sometimes critical of the large number of temporary staff that some classes have seen in quite short periods.

27. Strengths of the better teaching are rooted in three main things: the teacher has good classroom management skills; the work is well planned so that it meets the needs of the pupils in the class; and the lesson involves pupils well. Good teaching sees work delivered at a good pace, using a good range of learning styles. In such cases, pupils learn well. Their attention is engaged, and they make good progress. The work of the art and music departments contains many examples of these strengths. When pupils are given the chance, they enjoy taking responsibility for their learning; they do not always have enough chances to do so. Good lessons see pupils co-operating productively, and achievement is good as a result.
28. Where teaching is less than satisfactory, the commonest causes are connected with the teacher not having control of the class, and not matching work well enough to the needs of the pupils concerned. In particular, teaching in Years 7 and 8 has too many weaknesses because, in an attempt to minimise the impact of staffing difficulties on examination groups, the school has tended to deploy less experienced, short-term, or cover staff into the earlier years. Such staff tend to be more likely to experience problems when controlling pupils, as well as having an inadequate knowledge of the pupils and their needs. The effects of inadequate control of behaviour at this level are magnified by the inflexible grouping arrangements, that mean that those pupils who disrupt the work of others do so in almost every subject, because the groups are the same. They have ample opportunity to hone their disruptive skills. The new headteacher had already identified this as an area where grouping arrangements will be improved as a matter of urgency, to prevent the premature "labelling" of pupils, and to provide a better match of teaching to a pupil's needs. It is a tribute to the positive attitudes of the majority of the pupils that even in the face of dull, slow, and uninspiring teaching, behaviour did not always break down. Several cases were seen where pupils learned, in effect, in spite of the inadequate teaching.
29. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs is good in most subjects, and very good in art, music and, in Years 7 to 9, in English. In most lessons, learning is strongly supported by the skilled and well-targeted support of teaching assistants, and benefits from shared planning by the subject teacher and teaching assistants. Pupils' learning needs are well met through carefully planned individual programmes matched closely to pupils' Individual Education Plans. These provide clear and measurable targets for improvement, and clear guidance for teaching and learning strategies. Together with thorough and regular testing and assessment, they ensure that pupils' progress is monitored and tracked closely.
30. Pupils whose mother tongue is other than English generally learn well across the school, and make good progress. Teachers are aware of their language needs, with many of them receiving good in-class support from language support assistants. Pupils' progress and achievement are monitored well by the team leader and if any pupil begins to underachieve this fact is rapidly picked up and rectified through the interventions of the support team and the part-time counsellor.

31. Parents expressed concern that homework was not used well enough to promote learning. During the inspection, the use of homework was broadly satisfactory, although scrutiny of books and discussions with pupils suggest that in a few cases, this was not the norm. Pupils said that teachers did not always follow the homework timetable, whilst some parents commented that their questions about homework, noted in pupils' planners, sometimes went unanswered. Overall, homework is not used consistently enough to promote learning, particularly in the lower years of the school; in part this reflected sometimes high rates of staff turnover.
32. The thoroughness and constructiveness of assessment procedures are good. They have improved significantly since the previous inspection. The improvement has been powerfully driven through the very clear leadership of an assistant headteacher, himself an art specialist. He has developed procedures that are firmly underpinned by the principle that effective assessment raises standards. Systems are very secure. When pupils enter the school their attainments in end of Year 6 tests are analysed carefully. The school uses the results of this analysis to set targets that are challenging and realistic for pupils to reach by the end of Year 9. The school maintains a rigorous approach to using data to set targets and to monitor progress as the pupils continue through the school.
33. These procedures provide a good basis for teachers to respond to pupils' individual needs. Systematic monitoring every ten weeks effectively tracks the pupils' progress towards their targets. It triggers actions to improve progress such as extra support or the resetting of higher targets. Results in the end of Year 9 national tests form the basis for individuals' target grades at GCSE in all subjects. The monitoring of pupils' targets is carried out rigorously by senior staff, subject leaders, and heads of year. This effective use of targets ensures that subject teachers are well informed about the prior and potential attainments of each pupil. These procedures also effectively support the progress of different groups of pupils. Those whose first language is not English are assessed objectively. This identifies any support they may need. Their progress and performance are closely monitored. Their achievements are compared with those of other pupils to evaluate how effectively the school is supporting them. Similarly effective systems and outcomes are apparent for pupils with special educational needs.
34. The impact of these procedures is that pupils have a good understanding of how well they are doing, and of how to improve. The art and music departments are especially effective and innovative in their use of assessment criteria to support learning. The English department also uses very good procedures. It is no coincidence that these subjects are the ones in which pupils tend to do better. Overall, the picture is good. Pupils know precisely their level or grade in most subjects; the grade or level they are trying to reach; and the learning and performance criteria they need to fulfil. In many subjects this secure understanding emerges from written comments on work and through good spoken feedback and exemplification during lessons. The school acknowledges that the best practice is not fully embedded. Pupils' knowledge of how to improve is not satisfactory in geography and no better than satisfactory in modern foreign languages, design and technology, and physical education. The school has also correctly identified the need to clarify its thinking about how to best to include and support the role of form tutors in its assessment procedures.

### Example of outstanding practice

**In art and design, ICT based assessment is used extremely well to promote cultural understanding as well as achievement.**

In an excellent Year 9 lesson taken by a newly qualified teacher, ICT was used very innovatively to promote excellent learning. Recurrence of the imaginatively planned, ICT-based starter activity, following the format of the television show "Who Wants to be a Millionaire?", created high levels of interest and excellent motivation as questions got harder at intervals throughout the lesson. All the questions related very effectively to pupils' prior learning about their project. References to citizenship about acting democratically to produce agreed answers, further enhanced this excellent provision. An unusually effective ICT-based assessment process, developed by the teacher, was also very useful in enabling pupils to understand National Curriculum levels. Each pupil had their own computer page, with different visual digital images of their work, which enabled them to see how work is assessed as it progresses. Excellent marking reinforced this well. The project was based on Mexican artwork and on the rituals involved in the Day of the Dead festival. This was one of an excellent range of examples where pupils study other cultures' artwork, linking it with spiritual meanings. The teacher used the cultural context very imaginatively to promote pupils' understanding of these abstract ideas. Pace was brisk across a double lesson, with a wide range of activities creating rapid learning. The momentum of the lesson intensified as pupils responded with increasing enthusiasm to "Millionaire" questions. Pupils' achievements as they worked on their three-dimensional skeleton models, incorporating Mexican pattern and decoration, were excellent, and standards were well above average as a result of this experience.

### Sixth form

35. Teaching in the sixth form is good overall; so is learning. Within the focus subjects, teaching is excellent in art, but unsatisfactory in psychology. Elsewhere, teaching and learning are good. The strengths of the best teaching are similar to those seen in the main school, with work being well matched to needs, and assessment being used well to monitor progress against personal learning targets. Whilst the proportions of very good and excellent teaching are similar to those seen nationally, there is rather less good work, and correspondingly more that is no more than satisfactory.
36. The dominant style of work seen that is no more than satisfactory is teacher-centred, with little opportunity for interaction *between* students; contributions pass through the "chair". The merely satisfactory lessons tend to be carried out at a relaxed pace, and involve the teacher talking for too long, with relatively little checking of just how much, if anything, has actually been learned, for example through the use of individual whiteboards. Overall, the students depend too much on the teacher; initiative is neither being encouraged nor taken.
37. The good procedures that underpin assessment in the main school continue into the sixth form. Students receive targets based on their GCSE results. Their progress continues to be monitored via the ten-weekly monitoring procedures. Students know their targets and understand the criteria they need to fulfil to attain them. In the focus subjects, good practice was observed. In home economics and art, teachers mark work carefully and closely. Comments are detailed and informative. They draw explicitly upon grade criteria. Oral feedback during lessons is also good. The relatively small size of groups in many subjects also enables teachers to provide assessment on an individual basis. However, in psychology, procedures are unsatisfactory; there is not enough systematic use of data, tracking of progress, or target setting.

### The curriculum

*The breadth of curricular opportunities is satisfactory overall, although coverage of ICT in the main school does not fully meet statutory requirements. Enrichment opportunities are satisfactory, as are the school's accommodation and learning resources.*



## **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- There have been good improvements in the teaching of literacy, and in meeting statutory requirements, over the past two years.
- The school's arrangements for pupils with special educational needs, and who have English as an additional language, are very good.
- Grouping arrangements in Years 7 to 9 are still unsatisfactory, and still lack a clear philosophical basis.
- Statutory requirements for ICT are not fully met in the main school, although provision has improved markedly since 2003.
- A good range of trips and visits enhances the curriculum.
- The work of support staff has a very positive impact on the achievement of pupils who have special educational needs.

## **Commentary**

### ***Main school***

38. The breadth and balance of the curriculum in the main school are broadly satisfactory, but have some important weaknesses. As one might expect, the balance of the timetable has some skewing towards religious education at all levels. Otherwise, the allocation of time to subjects is generally typical of that seen nationally, except in core physical education in Years 10 and 11, which receives less time than usual, and this hampers achievement. The provision for citizenship and literacy has improved since the time of the previous inspection. Citizenship, for example, now meets statutory requirements, and the school has worked hard to improve pupils' literacy skills across the curriculum; pupils with English as an additional language make particularly good progress in Years 7 to 11.
39. When pupils arrive at the school, they are placed in one of three ability bands, higher, middle or foundation, based on information from their primary school, including their Year 6 national test results. Although there is some very limited setting in some subjects of the curriculum, most pupils continue to be taught in these bands throughout Years 8 and 9. This 'blunt instrument' strategy was criticised at the time of the previous inspection as having no philosophical rationale. The school subsequently decided not to modify the banding arrangements, although there has been no analysis of its impact of on pupils' learning, achievement, motivation or behaviour. As a method of ensuring that pupils are provided with work that matches their abilities, therefore, the banding system continues to lack a clear rationale. Worse, it means that pupils who are put in the same group as others who disrupt learning find themselves sharing classes with them in most subjects for up to three years. The new headteacher has been quick to identify that the grouping arrangements at this level require urgent attention.
40. The school's curriculum meets the requirements of the National Curriculum and religious education in Years 7 to 9, except for the provision for ICT, where pupils are not taught all of the strands listed in the programmes of study. The delivery of ICT was also unsatisfactory at the time of the previous inspection, but to a far greater degree; much has been achieved since then. The curriculum in modern foreign languages lacks breadth because pupils are only able to learn French. Additionally, some French classes are shared between two teachers who are able to meet to share information

only every two weeks. The spread of lessons across the two-week timetable is not always helpful to the continuity of learning, for example in music.

41. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 have access to an adequate range of courses that prepare them for employment or further study, both through a core programme and a range of options. Statutory requirements are met except for the provision for ICT. Lessons in the subject have been recently introduced for all pupils, but the current curriculum does not fully meet the requirements of the programmes of study, and some of the proposals for course accreditation would not resolve this. The school has made relatively little use so far of the growing flexibility in the curriculum from Year 10 onwards. The school is planning to offer a small number of vocational courses in conjunction with two local schools and a local college of further education. Overall, the school's plans for a widened range of provision across the 14 to 19 age range are less well advanced than in many schools, although the school is beginning to tackle this, in conjunction with others in the area. Where more vocational courses are available, they are a success; child development, for example, is a very popular option choice.
42. The curriculum provided for pupils with special educational needs is very good. Specialist provision is well planned to meet the pupils' specific individual learning requirements, and is strongly inclusive. Pupils have full access to the whole curriculum, which is enhanced by the support of an experienced and well-qualified team of learning support assistants. Subject teachers and assistants share in planning individual programmes to meet specific learning requirements. Provision is kept under review, and is adapted in the light of pupils' response and challenging learning requirements. The pupils' key skills and GCSE course work are well supported by specialist help in Years 10 and 11. Annual Reviews are thorough and well informed. Pupils who have English as an additional language are very well provided for. They make rapid progress in Years 7 to 10, and by Year 11, often outperform their white British colleagues. Pupils' needs are well catered for by a team approach, mostly through learning support assistants working in classrooms with pupils. Their emotional and social needs are also effectively met through the support and advice of a professional counsellor.
43. The planning for personal, social and health education is satisfactory overall, but has yet to have a wholly positive impact on pupils' behaviour and attitudes, particularly in Years 7 to 9. The school's arrangements for careers education are satisfactory.
44. The arrangements for enrichment are satisfactory overall. Pupils have a satisfactory range of activities to choose from, including those for sports, music and other activities. The school has begun to monitor the take-up of extra-curricular activities: an audit of the involvement of pupils from different cultural backgrounds was carried out in 2004, and the physical education department has made some changes as a result of this. The same department also counted the numbers involved in one week in February this year but, apart from this, the school does not know how many pupils are involved in several activities and how many take no part at all. A good range of trips and visits enhance the curriculum. Pupils and students have opportunities to visit theatres, galleries and concert halls, and there are trips to the First World War battlefields.
45. Staffing is satisfactory overall. The school is emerging from a difficult period, with a number of cases of long term absence through sickness, some at middle management level. As a result, several teaching posts are currently filled by temporary teachers, and though most teachers have appropriate qualifications that match the demands of the subjects they teach, there will be further changes before a permanent, stable work

force is fully in place. In trying to concentrate more experienced staff with examination groups, the school has a higher than usual proportion of supply and relatively inexperienced teachers in the lower years of the school. This contributes to some of the teaching difficulties at this level. The match of support staff to the school's needs is good. Learning support assistants and other support staff are particularly skilled, and make very good contributions to the achievement of pupils who have special educational needs or English as an additional language.

46. Overall, the accommodation is satisfactory. There have been many improvements, and much maintenance and decoration work has been carried out since the previous inspection. In particular, most departments' rooms are now grouped together. However, accommodation is poor in drama and unsatisfactory in science, as many lessons are still taught in non-specialist rooms. In mathematics, history, art and design, music and ICT accommodation is good, and is at least satisfactory in other departments. Changing facilities in physical education are poor as is drainage on pitches and lack of heating in the sport hall. Accommodation in design and technology has not kept up with the changing needs and demands of the subject. Disabled access to the site is satisfactory overall, but for some rooms, access remains difficult and roundabout.
47. The provision of learning resources is satisfactory. The number of computers is broadly in line with what would be expected in a school of this size, although their siting does not support access by other subjects. Resource levels are good in art, mathematics, citizenship, history and music. They are unsatisfactory in science, where there is a need for considerable updating. The library area is small for a school of this size. There has been some improvement since the previous inspection, but much of the stock is outdated.

### ***Sixth form***

48. The school provides a satisfactory range of academic and vocational subjects for a small sixth form. As well as the traditional two-year sixth form courses, students are able to stay on for one year in order to take GCSE re-sits or Intermediate GNVQ work. Some then return to complete advanced courses for two further years; this is a good way of widening access in an area that has relatively low levels of continuing education. There is some joint provision with neighbouring schools and the local college for further education, including the use of video-conferencing. The school is seeking to increase this, together with the use of distance learning to improve the cost effectiveness of provision, particularly where co-operation with other schools cannot be organised. In 2005/6, a greater range of shared options will become available to students. At present, many courses are relatively small. All students follow a planned programme of personal, social and health education and a course in beliefs and values.
49. There is a good programme of enrichment; sixth form students participate in sporting activities and make good contributions to the work of the school and the wider community. Some students help younger pupils: for example, with paired reading, or as 'Befrienders', and others support staff who are running extra-curricular activities in music and in physical education.
50. Staffing in the sixth form has suffered from the same pressures as in the main school. In general, however, teachers have appropriate skills for the subjects taught. Sixth form accommodation is satisfactory, with appropriate study space, and good access to



ICT facilities. Resource provision is satisfactory for sixth form work. The relatively small library is not suitable to support effective independent learning. In the focus subjects, resource levels are very good in ICT and art, good in English literature, psychology, and mathematics. They are unsatisfactory in physics, where there is not enough access to ICT equipment and much of the apparatus needs replacing.

### **Care, guidance and support**

*There are good arrangements to ensure the health, safety and welfare of the pupils and students. Academic support, advice and guidance based on monitoring are good; support for pastoral matters is adequate. There is unsatisfactory involvement of pupils and students through seeking, valuing, and acting on their views.*

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The school has effective policies overall to ensure the health and welfare of pupils and students.
- The revitalised school council is beginning to establish the pupils' and students' voice in the school, but at present, this is a relatively weak area of their development.
- Good academic support, advice and guidance help pupils to achieve well overall.
- Students and pupils are well informed about subject options and career opportunities.

## **Commentary**

### ***Main school***

51. Overall, pupils are well looked after. The school ensures that equipment, appliances and alarms are tested at the correct times, and that fire drills are held regularly. First aid is well organised and carried out; routine medication is administered carefully and all records are kept methodically. Risk assessment, including of some individual pupils, is generally good. Child protection procedures and protocols are good, and are explained carefully to all staff and also to students who volunteer to act as 'Befrienders'. The school has good relationships with the local social services; it also works hard to make and maintain links with those services that support pupils who are looked after in the community. However, supervision outside lessons does not always prevent incidents of bullying or harassment, in part because of the nature of the school site, with its many nooks and crannies.
52. An indication of the new emphasis on listening to the pupils is evident from the attendance at some of the revived school council meetings by the headteacher and governors. Frequent meetings at year and school level ensure that all pupils have the opportunity to make their suggestions heard. However, overall, pupils are concerned that they are not always listened to or their concerns taken seriously, and inspectors support this view. Other than the school council, there are no systematic procedures in place to gauge the opinions of pupils about what affects them. They are not yet able to take the fullest possible part in their learning, because their views are not sought about, for example, what they think about their school or what they expect from marking. Pupils with special educational needs do, however, contribute to their annual review. Overall, pupils with special educational needs are very well known, supported and guided. Their progress is closely tracked through systematic screening, testing and assessment. Both their personal and academic development are well supported.
53. Academic support, advice and guidance have improved because the quality of information made available to teachers through the assessment systems is now good. It enables them to identify and provide targeted support for pupils such as those with special educational needs or for whom English is not their first language. Pupils say that they are given good advice on how to improve their work. Personal development is not formally assessed, although it is clear from annual reports that form tutors do have an adequate grasp of their pupils' strengths and areas needing development. Support through the new inclusion project for a small number of pupils experiencing difficulties with their behaviour or attitudes includes the use of mentors and support from outside organisations. Currently, the outcomes are variable, but it is too early to make firm judgments. The chaplain is very helpful in providing pastoral support.
54. Pupils receive good quality advice on careers and the world of work. Careers education is delivered through the personal, social and health education programme and is well supported by the Connexions service. Work experience is well planned and overseen by the co-ordinator, who is keen that as many as pupils as possible make their own arrangements and look beyond the more obvious opportunities in the local area. Pupils and their parents are pleased with the programme for settling them into school; the school has plans to improve it, especially in getting all the new entrants into school together in the summer term prior to entry.

### ***Sixth form***

55. The good procedures to ensure the health, safety, welfare and well-being of the pupils extend to students in the sixth form.
56. Students say they received good advice and support about their courses in the sixth form and about what they might do after they leave. Not all of them are yet sure about this, but stressed that this is not due to lack of support from the school or from Connexions. Students say that written comments on pieces of work help them to improve, and that furthermore, most teachers are willing to give them additional help and support if they have difficulties. The school also supports students through mock interviews, and talks from outside speakers, including past students, about GAP years and the world of work. Students who are new to the school in the sixth form settle in well, although there is no structured induction process for any students.
57. The school council is led by the head boy and head girl. Recently they visited, with the head, a school in which the council is well established and they are very keen to make their own a success. Additionally the sixth form council is involved in organising their own leavers' ball, raising money through charity events, currently to support a school in Sri Lanka affected by the Christmas tsunami, and in supervising lunch times. As in the main school, the views of students are not as well canvassed, for example through departmental feedback, as they might be.

### **Partnership with parents, other schools and the community**

*The school's partnership with its parents is satisfactory, as is its partnership with other schools and colleges. Its relationships with the wider community are good.*

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Good quality information keeps parents abreast of how their children are doing.
- Parents have justified concerns about how well they are consulted.
- Pastoral links with local primary schools are good, but there are more limited curricular links with secondary partners at present.
- The school enjoys good links with the wider community.

### **Commentary**

58. The meeting with parents prior to the inspection, and the analysis of the questionnaires returned, show that the parents are generally satisfied with what the school provides. They are particularly pleased with the expectations set for their children, the way in which they settled at the school, and the fact that they like coming to school. Inspectors agree with these comments. Parents are concerned about the provision of homework, which was found to be variable, but satisfactory overall. Their concerns about behaviour in school and the lack of consultation with them about school issues were both found to be justified. The current procedure of only consulting with parents informally through the recently revived Parents' Association is an area needing development. Parent governors know that other parents' views need to be more widely sought.
59. Parents' concerns about the quality of information were found to be unsubstantiated. Parents receive regular, good quality information about how their children are doing in each subject and an informative written report at an appropriate time during the year. Parents' evenings also are held at apposite times, such as prior to the choice of

options in Year 9 and are well attended. The leaflets describing what pupils will be learning as they progress through the school are both helpful and clear. Information about trips and visits are provided by departments and good notice is given of the more adventurous trips which are more costly. Newsletters give a general outline of what has been going on in school as well as a calendar of forthcoming events. The contact book is used well by most parents as a good means of communicating between home and school. Governors rightly feel that the web-site, and the use of e-mail, need faster development as a means of involving parents more easily.

60. The learning support department works closely with parents, involving them fully in monitoring and reviewing pupils' progress, and target setting for improvement. The pupils' IEPs are translated into Panjabi for some parents. There are also very close links with primary schools in identifying pupils' learning needs on transfer, and with special schools in sharing ideas and resources. As a result, teachers are aware of pupils' specific difficulties when they transfer, and can make immediate provision for their needs.
61. The school's links with other local schools and the college of further education have improved since the previous inspection. The new headteacher recognises the advantages for teachers and students in being part of a network providing a wider and more relevant curriculum, and one which is cost-effective. The school can therefore offer vocational courses in hair and beauty, and in construction, for pupils in Years 10 and 11 because of its good links with local secondary schools.
62. There are particularly close links with other Kent Catholic schools, including good pastoral links with local Catholic primary schools. Although there are very good links in English, history and music, cross-phase curricular work is satisfactory overall. The music department is involved with outreach work in both primary and secondary schools.
63. The consortium arrangements through the Gravesham cluster provide additional choice and opportunities for sixth form students for two half-day sessions each week. There are also extended opportunities in religious education through the use of video-conferencing. Liaison with other schools has proved so successful that discussions are taking place about the possibility of extending provision. There are also increasing links between the physical education department and a local sports' college in order to extend provision at St John's.
64. The school has developed good links with the local community. The headteacher recognises that the school is a key part of a multi-faith community, and is keen to extend the school's links with all sections of this community. In due course, this will be promoted further by the school's seeking specialist arts status. The Catholic lay chaplain spends much of the week in school co-ordinating support for pupils at both a social and spiritual level, and works with a number of inter-faith groups. This work is of benefit to all those involved in promoting an understanding of one another's beliefs. The recent addition of extra-curricular provision in cricket is proving particularly popular with pupils from minority ethnic groups. The school is also attempting to increase its links with adults in the local Sikh community.
65. The school's work with local veterans of World War 2 is of particular note. These links resulted in visits to the Imperial War Museum, and the publication of a book entitled *Life at the Sharp End*, recounting local experiences during the war. Both pupils and veterans gained great benefit from the discussions and the exchange of information.

66. The school is very supportive of those in need, both in the local community and in the wider international community. As a result, the music department was able to raise over £9,000 for the Sudan Appeal through the sale of a CD. Furthermore, pupils were particularly anxious to support the Tsunami Appeal. A number of innovative fund-raising initiatives, particularly by sixth form students, quickly raised over £2,000.
67. At present, there is limited use of the school site, such as its sports facilities, by members of the local community. However, members of the local business community continue to provide valuable support for the school's work experience programme. This programme is popular with pupils, and provides them with an important insight into the world of work.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

*The school is passing through a period of considerable change. Governance, leadership and management are good overall. Whilst the leadership of the headteacher is good, that of other key staff is satisfactory. Although much progress has been made in ICT, the current programmes still do not meet, fully, the requirements of the National Curriculum.*

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Changes to the school's governance and leadership have strengthened the way that the school is run. There is a commitment to raise achievement further.
- The new headteacher has set out a very clear vision for how the school should improve.
- The leadership of art and design, and of music, is outstanding, and is reflected in the work of these departments.
- The induction and deployment of teachers need to be improved.
- Although monitoring by senior staff is now a strength of the school's work, that done by middle managers is of variable quality; some do little.
- The sixth form is well led, and enjoys the support of governors, although many groups are small at present.

### **Commentary**

#### ***Main school***

68. The governance of the school is good. Following the previous inspection, there was a relatively slow start to tackling the many problems raised. However, following the appointment of a new chair of governors, and appointing and training many new members, the governing body has reorganised its methods of working, with a much sharper committee structure. Governors have an accurate understanding of what now needs to be done to improve provision in the school. They do not underestimate what is required; for example, following recent visits to the school, they have realised the extent of bullying in the school. Equally, they have a clear picture of where its many strengths lie.
69. In almost all respects, the governing body meets its statutory responsibilities. The one exception is in the coverage of the programmes of study in ICT, where not all strands are yet being delivered. Governors could not be expected to have a detailed understanding of the National Curriculum, but they have already given their support to

a substantial upgrading of ICT facilities, and increased curriculum time. Governors receive appropriate information to ensure that they meet their responsibilities for an inclusive school. For example, they know how pupils from different backgrounds achieve, and have also ensured that the school is as accessible as possible for those with disabilities.

70. Leadership in the school is good overall. The headteacher, who has been in post for less than two terms, already has a very good grasp of the problems that need to be tackled, and of his priorities in bringing about improvement. The clarity of his vision, and his high aspirations, is very good, and they are accompanied by a very strong sense of determination to do the very best that is possible for the pupils and students at St John's. Other key staff share this vision to varying degrees, so that here, leadership is satisfactory. In music, and in art and design, for example, high aspirations and a focus on excellence are features of departmental work. As a result, teaching is of high quality, and there is very good achievement. The sense of determination to offer high quality provision is evident in the work of the co-ordinator for special educational needs, so that the pupils in her care achieve very well. At senior management level, the changed responsibilities have resulted in approaches to assessment, and to teaching and learning, that have made a significant difference to standards and achievement. These are particularly good examples of staff who share the vision, the aspirations and the determination of the headteacher, but long term absences, and a reluctance to change and do things differently, are still evident among some who hold leadership positions in the school. However, the commitment of leaders at all levels to the general concept of inclusion, and the promotion of equality, is good.
71. The leadership and management of provision for pupils with special educational needs are very good, and focus on enabling pupils to improve their achievement. There is a very clear direction for provision which is carefully monitored and kept under review. Systems and procedures within the Learning Support Department are very efficient and effective. Teaching assistants are well deployed and supported, and there are close links with external agencies. The effective links with subject departments are a significant strength in ensuring good consistency in provision for pupils with special educational needs throughout the school.
72. Similarly, the needs of pupils with English as an additional language are well managed within the school. The co-ordinator is a good role model, and ensures that available information is analysed well and presented to staff in an effective manner. Monitoring and evaluation of the pupils' progress and achievement are rigorous, and this ensures that staff involved know quickly if any pupil is not achieving as well as they should, so that interventions can be organised.
73. At the time of the inspection, the school was working with a development plan prepared prior to the new headteacher's arrival. This plan does not focus enough on the outcomes of the school's work at the level of pupils and students, being more often concerned with systems and resource matters. The headteacher, sensibly, has postponed work on a revised plan until after the inspection had been completed, and aims to link planning closely to the requirements of an application for specialist school status.
74. The overall quality of management is good. Many systems were overhauled following the previous inspection, and the subsequent visit by HMI. As a result, there is now a wide-ranging programme to review the work of teams within the school by senior managers, and to follow up the improvements that are required. A full programme of lesson and other observation by senior staff underlies the satisfactory performance management arrangements. In contrast, not all subjects have adequate monitoring by

the head of department; this often lies at the heart of weaknesses in provision. Arrangements for the induction of newly qualified teachers starting at the beginning of the academic year are satisfactory. However, those who start during the course of the year have very limited support. Nor are there appropriate arrangements for induction for teachers who move to St John's from other schools, or to help teachers who are promoted within the school to develop in their new roles. The deployment of teachers is not always as effective as it could be, and as a result, some staff are not getting the experience needed to be an all-rounder in this comprehensive school. In some cases, some staff teach only examination or higher attaining groups, whilst others, often less experienced, teach lower attainers or younger pupils. The headteacher is aware of these shortcomings, and has plans to deal with them.

**Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004**

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	4,135,897
Total expenditure	4,272,193
Expenditure per pupil	3,856

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	96,061
Balance carried forward to the next	(40,235)

75. The school's budget is set with appropriate reference to educational priorities. The involvement of the governors, through revised committee structures, is set to be greater in scrutinising spending plans. In the recent past, a sizeable budget deficit has reduced the flexibility for spending decisions; the deficit has been reduced in a controlled manner and should be eliminated during the coming financial year. The assistant headteacher responsible for financial matters makes very good use of Audit Commission and other data to monitor spending patterns against those of similar schools. At the previous inspection, value for money was unsatisfactory. The improved outcomes being achieved by the school, and the many changes made to bring them about, mean that value for money is now satisfactory, although capable of further improvement.

**Sixth form**

76. The governors show a good understanding of the sixth form and its work. Statutory requirements at this level are met. Governors understand that at present, many groups are too small, and have thus supported the search for partnerships with other schools and colleges, and the increased use of technology, to provide a diverse curriculum that meets students' needs. There is growing involvement of the governors in sixth form work. Two governors are attached to the sixth form, and make occasional visits, and the head of sixth form recently attended a meeting of the governing body to share in the revision of the sixth form admissions policy. Plans are in place for governors to be involved in the interviews of sixth form applicants.

77. Leadership of the sixth form is good. The head of sixth form, together with the head of Year 12 and sixth form tutors, comprise an effective team. Though not a member of the senior leadership team, the head of sixth form attends their meetings where relevant issues are discussed. Communication with heads of department is good, and there is a good flow of information on sixth form matters. For example, the head of sixth form receives copies of observations carried out on sixth form teaching, so that she has good oversight of teaching and learning styles in the various classes.

78. The management of sixth form matters is good, with the same improved review and evaluation systems as in the main school. The effectiveness of provision is now far clearer, thanks to the great improvement in assessment information now available. The costs of operating the sixth form are monitored closely; many groups are small at present. However, given the good achievement of most students, many of whom would not normally undertake advanced study, cost-effectiveness is satisfactory overall.

## **WORK-RELATED LEARNING**

Provision for work-related learning (WRL) is satisfactory.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- All pupils follow work experience and preparation and debriefing for this is good.
- Co-ordination of WRL is sound, and communication with partners is adequately developed.
- Most subjects do not give sufficient emphasis to work-related skills to make the curriculum more relevant.
- Few vocational courses are currently available in Years 10 and 11.

### **Commentary**

79. The school's arrangements meet statutory requirements. There is one vocational course in Year 11 and one in Year 10. These courses are followed by a small number of students, and the Year 11 vocational ICT double award course is currently being phased out. Results from this course were well below average in 2004. In addition, there is a core ICT course in Year 10, but currently this has no external accreditation. An increased range of vocational courses available through attachment to cluster schools is currently under investigation.
80. In Years 10 and 11, pupils learn how to make job applications and prepare their *curriculum vitae*. All pupils do work experience for at least one week at the end of Year 10, although about half do two weeks. Most pupils arrange this themselves, although in some cases the Enterprise Business Partnership helps with placements. Pupils are encouraged to search for placements beyond the locally available options of transport and commerce. Form tutors visit pupils during their work placements. Pupils enjoy their placement and many are offered part time or holiday jobs as a result.
81. All pupils have a careers interview. In Year 11 they all take part in a careers fair, meeting representatives from industry and further education, for which they are well prepared.
82. Throughout Years 10 and 11 there are three 'Stop' days. One is used for vocational and employment activities, involving links with local partnerships and the services including armed forces, fire, ambulance and the police. A second day links to enterprise and a third to business concepts. In Year 10 there are two and a half mini-enterprise days, aimed at giving pupils a voice. The pupils are currently working on producing a school magazine called 'Chalk and Talk', formerly produced by teaching staff. Year 10 pupils have contributed to a book about World War 2 experiences by taking an active role in interviewing friends and family.
83. Leadership and management of WRL are satisfactory. Pupils have work files and their progress is monitored. Pupils receive good advice when planning their GCSE option



choices, as well as impartial guidance on other institutions offering post-16 courses. However there is currently no audit of work-related experiences within subject areas and WRL is not yet securely embedded throughout the curriculum.

## **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**

The provision in English is **good**.

##### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Achievement is good overall and very good in Years 7 to 9.
- Assessment is very good and supports learning very well in most respects.
- The good leadership of the head of department has ensured an effective response to the recommendations of the previous inspection.
- Teaching is consistently good, and shows pupils clearly how to improve.
- Some elements of teaching, such as methods of questioning and the use of lesson objectives, require improvement.

##### **Commentary**

84. Pupils enter the school with average standards. In the 2003 national tests at the end of Year 9, the most recent year for which validated data are available, the results were well above average. Results were average in 2002. The provisional results for 2004 are well above average. Pupils appear to have done better than expected given their average results in tests at the end of Year 6. At the end of Year 11, results in GCSE English at grades A\*-C were above average in 2004. This maintains a trend of improvement since the previous inspection. Pupils did better than expected. In English literature the results fell to a below average level, at variance with the above average levels of previous years. There is evidence that the progress of pupils at the grade C/D borderline was undermined by difficulties in recruiting specialist teachers.
85. Standards in the current Year 9 and Year 11 are well above average. Overall, achievement is good; it is very good for pupils in Year 9 and good in Year 11, where pupils are sustaining and deepening their well above average standards achieved in their Year 9 tests. In the current Year 9 more than eight out of ten are already working at the expected level for this age. More than half are working at higher levels. Pupils are making very good progress in becoming assured and well organised writers in a range of genres. They are also making very good progress in their ability to justify, in detail, their understanding of different types of texts. In Year 11, nearly seven out of ten pupils are working at levels associated with grade C or higher. Assured writing and detailed responses to texts also typify much of their work. The proportion working at grades A\* or A is higher than in recent years. The proportion working below the expected standards in both Year 9 and 11 is low. Pupils with special educational needs progress as well as other pupils, as do pupils whose first language is not English. Careful teaching of basic skills enables lower attaining pupils to do well in relation to their starting points. Standards of ICT and numeracy observed are broadly average.
86. Teaching and learning are good. Assessment is very good, especially during Years 7 to 9. It is the combination of good teaching and very good assessment that leads to the very good achievement by Year 9. Marking is extremely thorough. It helps pupils to understand, on an individual basis, what they do well, and how to improve. The pupils'

application of grade and level criteria to assess the standards of their own, and each other's, work secures their understanding of how to improve. All teachers track closely the progress of pupils towards their targets. The constant focus on attainment raises the pupils' expectations of themselves and their standards. Even so, standardised assessment tasks in Years 7 to 9 are not yet used enough. Teaching methods are effective and varied. The persistent emphasis on showing pupils how to improve and giving them frequent chances to apply and secure techniques result in good acquisition of skills. Frequent use of pair and group work adds interest to the lessons. It also develops independent learning, as does the use of research tasks on the Internet. The setting of substantial homework makes a good contribution to consolidating learning. There is not enough use of open ended questioning techniques during whole class discussion. There are not enough chances to review learning objectives during lessons, although this is good at the end of lessons. Some lesson aims focus too much on the tasks to be done and not sufficiently on what the pupils will learn.

87. The leadership of the subject is good, as is its management. The head of department and her team have responded with rigour and purpose to the criticisms of the previous inspection. Progress in English is no longer unsatisfactory; it is now good. Lessons are now well paced and challenging. They are based on improved schemes of work that have a sharper focus on skills and outcomes. The quality of marking is now very good. The head of department closely and effectively monitors and evaluates teaching and learning. Teaching, results and standards are better than at the previous inspection, so improvement has been good.

### **Literacy and language across the curriculum**

88. Pupils enter the school with average standards of literacy. Standards seen in the school are above average. Pupils make good progress in improving their extended writing and in their reading skills. Most make extended spoken contributions during lessons and increase their ability to apply key subject vocabulary accurately. The provision for the development of literacy is good. Since the previous inspection, the school has set out to improve provision for literacy. It has provided training to support the improvement of extended writing and is now targeting the use of reading in lessons. Pupils with weaknesses in literacy receive good support through additional programmes. Other events such as a children's book week, help for younger pupils from sixth form students and reading during tutor time also support progress. Most subjects support literacy well. Support is very good in art, but unsatisfactory in science.

### **Modern foreign languages**

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Some teaching is good, providing well-planned opportunities for good learning.
- There is a significant amount of unsatisfactory teaching, which lacks pace, challenge and interest; pupils make unsatisfactory progress in these lessons as a result.
- Curriculum leadership is unsatisfactory, lacking clear overall direction for the department.
- Most key issues from the last inspection have yet to be fully addressed.

### **Commentary**

89. In 2004, when about half of the pupils in Year 11 took the GCSE examination in a modern foreign language, results in French were broadly average. In German, they were above average, the difference being explained by the fact that the highest attainers studied German in that particular year. The pupils tended to do as well in French and in German as they did in their other subjects. Since the previous inspection, in both 2002 and 2003, when German was not offered, GCSE results in French were consistently above the national average. German is now no longer on offer, and pupil numbers in French have declined year on year to 56 pupils in Year 11 and only 10 pupils in Year 10.
90. In work seen during the inspection, standards in French in Year 9 are average overall. Most pupils have a satisfactory understanding of the French they have learned, and, when given the opportunity, can write and speak in simple French with a sound level of competence. In general, the pupils' reading and writing skills are better developed than their speaking skills: lessons observed during the inspection devoted more time to written language at the expense of spoken language. In Year 11, standards remain average overall. The pupils' understanding of written and spoken French at this level is satisfactory, and sometimes good. They can handle basic grammar well, write fairly accurately, and are beginning to recognise ways in which they can improve their written style. Speaking skills remain less well developed. In general, the pupils' attitudes to learning French are good, and this is a positive factor in their learning, even when the lesson does not engage them well.
91. These average standards represent only satisfactory achievement at all levels. Many pupils, particularly those in the higher sets, would be able to cope with more challenging work and hence reach higher standards. Where teaching is stimulating and expectations of what pupils can achieve are high, which is often in middle and lower sets, the pupils achieve well. Pupils with special educational needs, gifted and talented pupils, and those for whom English is not the first language, achieve well in lessons where the teaching provides appropriately for their particular needs.
92. Teaching and learning are broadly satisfactory throughout the main school. In lessons in which the teaching is good, the work gets off to a brisk, orderly start, with the pupils aware of what they are going to learn. In such cases, the teacher makes the best use of the time available by ensuring that the pupils are well involved and working at a good pace; presentations are lively, with plenty of teacher enthusiasm and pupil involvement. However, there is also a significant proportion of unsatisfactory teaching that lacks pace and challenge, so that the pupils are not required to work hard enough, or at a sufficiently high level. Consequently they do not make as much progress as they should. As at the time of the last inspection, much of the work seen lacked variety, which means that many pupils' experience of learning French is dull.
93. In many lessons, the pupils are given insufficient oral practice to allow them to develop their speaking skills, and to help them to commit patterns of language to memory. Often, therefore, the teachers' expectations of the pupils' ability to speak French are frequently not high enough. This is not always the case: in a few lessons the teachers encourage speaking skills well, and even quite young pupils are able to sustain a long conversation in simple, but largely correct, confident French. The teaching makes satisfactory contributions to the development of literacy, and very occasionally to numeracy. The development of the pupils' computer skills through French is unsatisfactory: it is not planned for in schemes of work, and only one of the teachers is giving the pupils regular opportunities to use computers. The teachers are using

assessment data provided by the school to evaluate the pupils' achievement and to set appropriate targets. The marking of the pupils' work is regular; it would be improved by the addition of helpful comment, which would show the pupils clearly what they need to do to improve the quality of their work.

94. Curriculum leadership is unsatisfactory. Management is broadly satisfactory, but the department lacks clear overall vision and direction. The head of department reviews teaching and learning, but does not yet monitor colleagues' work rigorously or systematically enough to bring about improvements in the pupils' achievement. The department now needs to be enabled to work together as a team, so that all teachers can use the data provided by the school to evaluate the impact of their teaching, the progress of their pupils, and the progress of the department as a whole towards common goals. Support for teachers new to the department has been weak; and professional development opportunities have not been sought to help teachers use new technology in lessons. Key weaknesses highlighted at the time of the last inspection in teaching, in monitoring, in providing access for the pupils to computers, and in working together as a team to share good practice across the department, have not been properly addressed. The department has therefore made unsatisfactory progress since the previous inspection.

## **MATHEMATICS**

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Standards have improved and are now above average.
- Good management is leading to rising standards.
- Good teaching and learning have led to the good achievement of pupils.
- The management of pupils' learning is unsatisfactory in a minority of lessons.

### **Commentary**

95. In the national tests at the end of Year 9, results have improved since 2000. They were above average in 2003, but below the average for similar schools. In 2004 results dipped slightly from those of 2003 due to staffing difficulties, but remained overall above average. There was no significant difference between the performance of boys and girls in 2003 or 2004. Standards in GCSE in 2004 were above average, as they were in recent years, and well above the average of similar schools. Boys performed better than girls, the difference between them being narrower than the year before. Mathematics was one of the better performing subjects in the school.
96. Standards are average when pupils start at the school. By Year 9 standards of work seen are above average, and rising, representing good achievement. Numeracy levels are above average. By Year 11 standards are also above average and rising, close to being well above average, representing good achievement. High attaining pupils have a secure level of algebraic skill. Average attaining pupils present their work neatly and accurately, close to the upper levels of the intermediate course, in work on similar triangles, for example. Lower attaining pupils work accurately with routine operations. Standards of literacy are above average. Standards in ICT are average. There is no significant difference in the achievement of boys and girls, pupils with special needs, those whose first language is not English, gifted and talented pupils, and those from different ethnic backgrounds.
97. Teaching and learning are good throughout the school; some of the teaching is very good. The strengths of the teaching are the subject expertise of the teachers and the planning of lessons. Explanations to pupils are clear, accurate and precise, the source of pupils' good learning. The planning of lessons in years 7 to 9 follows the National Numeracy Strategy well, and results in the good teaching seen. Planning provides well for the different standards of pupils in the same lesson in Year 11 because the teaching is focused clearly on the needs of all the pupils. In lessons where the teaching is very good or better, pupils make extensive oral contributions because the teaching is interesting, challenging through the questions posed and, at times, humorous. So their learning is very good. In the minority of lessons where there is unsatisfactory teaching, the management of pupils' learning is unsatisfactory, so that the pupils underachieve.
98. Leadership of the curriculum is good. Management is good, as the staffing difficulties that led to a dip in standards in 2004 have eased. Some difficulties remain. The provision for pupils with special needs is very good. Assessment and monitoring have improved sharply since the last inspection. Management has set out good developmental plans for the department, including further provision for teaching using ICT, for example. Standards are rising. Improvement since the previous inspection has been good.

### **Mathematics across the curriculum**

99. Standards of numeracy across all subjects are above average. Excellent teaching in art of two and three-dimensional skills ensures a very good sense of space. The

analysis of data and their use in both English and history is above average. Spreadsheets are used satisfactorily in ICT. In geography, standards are average, for example in simple calculations, graphs and scale drawing. Standards are as expected in physical education. There is insufficient use of mathematics in Years 7 to 9 in science, in developing the use of formulae. Pupils have confidence in their use of number by the time they reach Year 11. They regularly use formulae successfully in calculations. Lower attaining pupils in Year 11 have some difficulty in the use of number, in the scale of graphs, for example.

## **SCIENCE**

Provision in science is **satisfactory**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Curriculum leadership in the department is good, developing good teamwork.
- Recent examination results have been above average.
- During the inspection, there was insufficient teaching that was good or better.
- The quality of the accommodation and learning resources is unsatisfactory.

### **Commentary**

100. Results in national tests at the end of Year 9 in 2003 were well above average. They were average compared with the results of pupils in similar schools. There are no consistent differences in the results of boys and girls at this level. Pupils also performed well in 2004, although overall standards were slightly lower. Since the standards of these pupils were broadly average on entry to the school, their achievements in science in Years 7 to 9 were good. In the 2004 GCSE examinations, all pupils were entered for the double science award. Standards were above average, an improvement on 2003. Pupils performed better in science than in their other subjects, particularly the boys. Their achievement was good.
101. Standards of work seen during the inspection were average in Years 9 and 11. This is below the level of recent test and examination performances because, in the past year, there has been a large turnover of teaching staff, and not all teachers have yet established good working relationships with pupils. Furthermore, the pupils' attitudes to learning are only satisfactory. Teachers therefore spend too much time trying to manage the pupils' behaviour, and deterring irrelevant chatter, and there is insufficient emphasis on helping them to learn the principles of science. Present levels of achievement are therefore only satisfactory because of limitations in the teaching. Pupils with special educational needs, and those who are gifted and talented, are well known to their teachers. They are well integrated and make satisfactory progress, but teachers rarely prepare work specifically for their needs. Pupils with learning difficulties work particularly well when receiving learning support assistance, as their needs are more closely met.
102. Teaching is satisfactory overall. No very good teaching was seen in Years 7 to 11, and in one lesson, teaching was poor. Teachers have good command of their subject, and they plan the content of lessons well. There is good progression in the work. For example, there is increasing use of investigative work to improve pupils' enjoyment and understanding. However, there are a number of inconsistencies. Although lesson objectives are generally clear, too little time is devoted to summarising the work

covered to ascertain how successful the lesson has been. The overall contribution to the development of pupils' literacy skills is unsatisfactory. There is too much copying from the board, for instance; this does not challenge pupils to think, and to describe their observations in their own words. By contrast, there is regular use of numeracy skills in drawing and analysing graphs, and in the use of formulae. The use of ICT has improved, but is still variable across the department. The depth and quality of marking is occasionally exemplary, but too often teachers' comments lack encouragement for pupils, and advice about how to improve their work. There are regular assessments of pupils' standards, and these are related to examination grades. This enables teachers to identify any under-achievement, and to take remedial action.

103. Curriculum leadership of the department is good. The head of department has only recently joined the school. She has already reviewed the quality of lessons and drawn up a list of priorities necessary to improve the overall quality of provision. For instance, the organisation of pupil grouping in Years 7 to 9 is complex, with insufficient opportunity to make changes to groupings where appropriate. This limits opportunities to match the teaching to pupils' needs. Management of the department is satisfactory, and good relationships have been established with both teaching and non-teaching staff. There is a purposeful working atmosphere within the department. However, the quality of the accommodation for science is unsatisfactory. The science laboratories are close together, but many of them require a facelift to bring them up to an acceptable standard. There is also an overall shortage of laboratories, so that too many classes are held in classrooms, further reducing the quality of learning. Resources are also unsatisfactory. The annual allocation of funds is insufficient to allow the department to keep up with expectations, particularly in physical science. At present, some equipment is sub-standard. Improvement since the previous inspection has been satisfactory, although at present, there is insufficient enjoyment of science for pupils and teachers alike.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Imaginative teaching in Years 7 to 11 captures the pupils' interest and encourages them to learn.
- The schemes of work in Years 7 to 11 need to be developed to ensure full coverage of all of the programmes of study for ICT.
- The use of ICT across the curriculum is not audited and planned sufficiently well.
- The planning for, and administration of, the department are unsatisfactory.

### **Commentary**

104. The GCSE results at the end of Year 11 in 2004 were well below average and pupils tend to do less well in ICT than in their other subjects. No examined ICT course was offered in 2003.
105. Standards on entry are below average, reflecting the very wide variation in the pupils' experiences of the subject. In Year 9, standards of work seen are well below average. Achievement in Years 7 to 9 is therefore unsatisfactory. Standards in Year 11 remain well below average making achievement in Years 10 and 11 also unsatisfactory. Recent changes in staffing have resulted in more confident coverage of the



programmes of study. However, work scrutiny has shown that due to earlier gaps in the schemes of work achievement remains unsatisfactory. In Years 7 to 9 pupils are able to use ICT for modelling, exploring patterns and relationships using simple formulae and tools to make predictions. Numerical skills are good and pupils are developing their proficiencies in problem solving. Higher attaining pupils are able to select relevant information from reliable sources. They organise text and images in the form of a draft newsletter suitable for a specific audience, showing good literacy skills. Year 11 pupils understand theoretical concepts of ICT and are able to set up systems for storage and retrieval of data competently. However work samples show no evidence of control and measurement and there is very little work on the development of knowledge skills and understanding.

106. Teaching and learning are unsatisfactory overall, although individual specialist lessons seen during the inspection were good or very good. However, discussion with the pupils, and examination of their work, showed that this is not typical of what they have experienced; for example, homework was not a normal feature of their work. The many gaps in their work show that teaching and learning have, overall, been unsatisfactory in the main school, and achievement has been too low, for too long. However, this is a department that is in transition. Recent appointments have had a very positive impact on teaching and learning in lessons. By using their imagination and expertise, whilst reinforcing their expectations for good behaviour, these teachers ensure that pupils make good progress in lessons. In the best lessons, pupils are riveted by high quality presentations by energetic teachers using a variety of activities within the lessons to focus pupils' interest. The assessment of GCSE coursework is very thorough and good questioning and answering enables teachers to determine pupils' knowledge and understanding. That this does not result in good achievement overall reflects the many earlier gaps in coverage, and the lack of planning for the delivery of the subject as a whole.
107. Leadership and management are unsatisfactory. No long-term departmental development plan was made available during the inspection. Current departmental documentation is out of date and incomplete, giving little detail of departmental policies. There is an expectation that homework does not need to be set in Years 7 to 10. Longer serving and more experienced members of the department do not teach in Years 7 to 11, and the Year 10 core ICT course has no external accreditation. The use of ICT within other subject areas in Years 7 to 11 is not audited or planned, and no guidelines are available for assessment of ICT within other subject areas. Since the previous inspection, there has been a heavy investment in equipment, and the department is now well resourced. However, most ICT suites are clustered near the sixth form area, and not effectively utilised, being occupied by small classes for many lessons. This limits access to the facilities by other subjects. Statutory requirements are still not met, despite the increase in time allocation, and standards in Years 9 and 11 are now well below average. This makes improvement unsatisfactory overall.

### **Information and communication technology across the curriculum**

108. The installation of interactive whiteboards has had a positive impact on teaching and learning in some subject areas. However, there remain significant shortcomings in the use of ICT in most subject departments. There have been considerable improvements in the use of ICT in music, design and technology, and in art and design since the 2003 inspection, although the computers in art and design are becoming obsolete, and access to more powerful machines is needed. Although the use of ICT in science has improved, it is still unsatisfactory. Inadequate computer access also limits progress in history, English, geography, and mathematics. Planned ICT use is included in the schemes of work in many subjects, but coherent planning to ensure that all

departments have access is unsatisfactory, and there remains very limited provision in some subject areas.

## **HUMANITIES**

*History and geography were inspected. Provision in religious education is being evaluated separately under a diocesan Section 23 inspection.*

### **History**

Provision in history is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Standards are improving and pupils achieve well in Years 7 to 9.
- Teaching has improved significantly recently, but is still not consistently strong across the department.
- Assessment is thorough, but data are not used well enough to track the pupils' progress.
- Marking is done regularly, but does not always give clear enough guidance for improvement.
- Enthusiastic and lively leadership has resulted in very good improvement since the previous inspection.

### **Commentary**

109. The GCSE results at the end of Year 11 were well below average in 2004, as they have been in recent years. Students performed less well in history than in their other subjects. Current standards of work seen are higher. They are above average in Year 9, and average in Year 11. Standards in Year 9 reflect good achievement when compared with pupils' average standards on entry. In Years 10 and 11 achievement is satisfactory, broadly in line with what would be expected from these pupils' standards in Year 9. Pupils do less well in Years 10 and 11 partly because of the weaker teaching that many experienced in their earlier years at the school. Many lack confidence as learners. There was no significant difference in the achievement of boys and girls, or of those with special educational needs or language needs, in the work seen during the inspection.

110. Standards and achievement have improved because of better teaching resulting from changes in teachers over the last two years. Improvement is particularly evident in Year 9, where pupils have good knowledge, understanding and historical skills. In a middle ability Year 9 group, pupils worked confidently at above average levels, using their knowledge well in identifying and linking evidence about conditions in trench warfare. In Year 11, knowledge is generally sound, and good in the case of higher attaining pupils, but the depth of understanding is less secure. In a lesson on Nazi Germany for instance, pupils identified factors explaining the reluctance of Britain and France to engage in war, but were less clear in their understanding of the options available to Neville Chamberlain. Written work reflects similar standards with strengths in accuracy and detail, but is not always sufficiently analytical and critical in the interpretation of sources. High quality assessment projects reflect good independent

research drawing well on clearly focused fieldwork. Literacy, numeracy and ICT skills are good.

111. Teaching is good at all levels, although earlier weaknesses mean that the pupils in Years 10 and 11 do not achieve at a similar level to date. Lessons are brisk, purposeful with clear explanations enhanced by the use of ICT. High expectations lead to a good response. Year 8 pupils worked at full stretch in analysing pictorial evidence about the causes of the Plague relishing the pace and challenge of the lesson. Pair work is effective in enabling pupils to explore issues, but in many lessons learning relies too much on the teacher's in-put, and there is not enough opportunity for pupils to deepen their understanding through discussion. Questioning checks knowledge but does not challenge pupils to develop their ideas. Good behaviour and classroom relationships result from effective behaviour management. Where teaching is weakest expectations are too low, tasks are undemanding and resources are of poor quality. Points raised by pupils are not built upon and their enthusiasm dampened. Regular marking and assessment are linked to National Curriculum and GCSE levels, but not all marking provides enough guidance for improvement, and the use of assessment data to track progress against pupils' earlier attainment is not fully developed.
112. Very good leadership provides inspiration and a clear direction for provision in history. The head of department's very strong lead is focused strongly on improvement and promoting enthusiasm for history throughout the school. He has achieved much since his relatively recent appointment especially in the innovative enrichment of the curriculum. The school's partnership with the Imperial War Museum in events commemorating the 60th anniversary of the Second World War was particularly impressive. Management is good. Schemes of work are well planned and teachers work well together, but strategies to ensure consistency in teaching are not sufficiently rigorous and systematic to be fully effective. Very good improvement has been made since the last inspection.

## **Geography**

Provision in geography is **unsatisfactory**.

## Main strengths and weaknesses

- Higher attaining pupils are not challenged by sufficiently demanding tasks.
- Pupils are attentive and keen to learn.
- Pupils do not have a clear picture of what they need to do to improve their work.
- ICT is not used effectively to support teaching and learning.

## Commentary

113. The GCSE results in 2004 were below average and that has been the trend in recent years. The pupils tend to do less well in geography than in their other subjects.
114. Standards are broadly average when pupils start in Year 7. In work seen they are average in Year 9, which represents satisfactory achievement. The pupils understand a range of geographical terms and respond positively to question and answer work; this confirms their factual knowledge. The pupils who select geography in the options in Years 10 and 11 are broadly average at the start of the course. By Year 11, standards of work seen are below average, so their achievement is unsatisfactory. This is a reflection of less satisfactory teaching, and some gaps in the knowledge of pupils arising from staffing difficulties during a period of long term staff absence. Although the pupils are aware of facts, they are unable to produce detailed analyses. Boys perform better than girls. Pupils with special educational needs achieve in line with other pupils, but higher attainers are not sufficiently challenged. Geography supports literacy by its use of key words, and numeracy by the use of graphs and simple calculations. Very little use is made of computers and associated software to stimulate learning.
115. Teaching and learning are satisfactory in Years 7 to 9, but unsatisfactory in Years 10 and 11. At all levels, the pupils are keen to learn, with attitudes and behaviour consistently good. By using a warm manner and praise, teachers give the pupils confidence to answer questions well, as was seen in a good lesson on rainforests. The pupils are able to describe processes and locate features, but do not explain their answers in detail. Much of the teaching, however, is over directed, with low expectations and insufficient challenge. The pupils are willing but passive. In a good lesson in Year 7, there was energy and enthusiasm but too often, there is a lack of pace and too little variety of learning activities, and an over dependence on listening. The pupils are not given opportunities for group work, independent research or study. There are too few high order tasks that enable higher attainers to think, evaluate and write at length. Homework is regularly set, but the tasks are not challenging. The teachers mark work and use positive praise comments, but assessment is unsatisfactory because there are not enough explicit references to National Curriculum levels or GCSE grade criteria, and pupils are not given specific advice on how to improve their work.
116. As a result of the continuing absence of the head of department, it is not possible to make a judgement on curriculum leadership. Management is unsatisfactory, as there is insufficient monitoring of teaching and learning. While schemes of work and policies are in place, they are inconsistently applied. Currently, teachers do not have enough opportunities for effective professional development. Improvement since the last inspection has been unsatisfactory, as few of the previous issues raised, such as challenge for high attainers and the use of ICT, have been tackled.

## **TECHNOLOGY**

### **Design and technology**

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

## Main strengths and weaknesses

- The department works well as a team and is well led.
- Well-taught classroom routines enable pupils to work independently in practical lessons.
- Teachers support pupils well in lessons.
- Projects are not planned sufficiently well to challenge all pupils, and this restricts the depth of knowledge and skills acquired by some.
- Arrangements for assessment at the end of Year 9 are not rigorous enough.

## Commentary

117. The GCSE results at the end of Year 11 in 2004 were below average, with boys outperforming girls. Pupils gained better results at grades A\* to C in food technology, electronic products and graphic products than they did in other areas of the subject.
118. Pupils enter the school at Year 7 with below average skills in design and technology, reflecting their diverse experiences in primary schools. By Year 9, standards of work seen are average; this shows that the pupils' achievements are good. Those pupils who opt to take design and technology in Years 10 and 11 start the course with below average standards, with variations from discipline to discipline within the subject. By Year 11, work seen shows that pupils are working at an average level, and therefore achievement is good. Teachers use technical language effectively which is beneficial to the development of pupils' literacy skills. Numeracy is satisfactory, with good attention being paid to accuracy in measurement. Pupils use ICT very well in food studies and textiles to present their work to a high standard.
119. Teaching is good overall, as is learning. Teaching seen during the inspection was satisfactory, but a significant number of these lessons were taught by supply staff. Scrutiny of work done over a longer period and discussions with pupils show teaching and learning to be better than this. Teachers plan lessons thoroughly, and teach basic routines well; as a consequence, pupils work with confidence and competence in practical lessons, and generally produce quality artefacts. Good relationships within the classroom support learning and encourage pupils to work with enthusiasm. Projects in the areas of design and technology are well structured, but there are missed opportunities to extend and challenge pupils to enable them to attain the higher grades. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress due to the supportive way teachers understand and respond to their individual needs. Marking is positive, but it does not always inform pupils what they have to do to improve. Assessment is used effectively to set individual targets and these set high expectations for pupils in Years 10 and 11. Teachers' assessments at the end of Year 9 do not take full account of all the aspects of the design process when assessing pupils' progress, and the process needs to be more rigorous.
120. Both the leadership and the management of the subject are good. There is a strong vision for development within the department, which focuses on improving teaching and learning. Structures are in place to support this. Good teamwork is a strength, and ideas are shared within the department to the benefit of the pupils' achievement. Satisfactory progress has been made since the previous inspection.

## VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

*Art and design, and music, were inspected. Drama was sampled.*

121. Two drama lessons were observed, one in Year 10 and one in Year 11. The teaching was good in one and satisfactory, but with good features, in the other. Energetic teachers work hard to involve pupils in their work, but are hampered by inadequate accommodation, as there is no specialist drama studio, and the hall is too large, and lacks the appropriate atmosphere to create a suitable ambience for the subject.

## Art and design

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

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils' achievement is excellent overall, but particularly in Years 10 and 11.
- Teaching, learning and curriculum planning are excellent.
- Excellent opportunities enable pupils to develop very good understanding of the spiritual, cultural and social dimensions of their lives.
- Highly innovative use of ICT enlivens lessons and provides a very good tool for assessment.
- Leadership and management of the department are excellent.
- The department's ICT hardware is too old to be useful and access to ICT suites is very restricted.

### Commentary

122. Pupils enter Year 7 with average skills and understanding. They make very rapid progress because the curriculum is very well planned and because teaching and learning are excellent. Standards improve very quickly in two- and three-dimensional work. By Year 9, standards are well above average, representing very good achievement. Boys in particular do much better than usual, and very few pupils work at below average levels. Pupils use an exciting variety of materials and media in projects which provide excellent insights into the artwork of other cultures and times. The development of the pupils' understanding of a wide range of artists' work is very good indeed.
123. Standards of work seen are very high by Year 11. The GCSE results in the last two years have been well above average, with boys achieving particularly well. Results are above those in pupils' other subjects. Pupils of all abilities, those with English as an additional language, and those with special educational needs, do very well in the subject. Pupils bring very good skills levels from earlier years and apply these imaginatively and competently to coursework projects. They enjoy their work and respond highly positively to teachers' very high expectations. Attitudes and behaviour are very good, with pupils wanting to do well and to succeed. Personal development remains excellent. Year 10 is an unusually strong year group, with some very high potential. For them, and for those in Year 11, achievement across their time in the school is excellent, given the depth of development on a very wide frontage. Literacy skills, together with spatial aspects of mathematics, are well planned for in the subject.
124. Teaching and learning across the department are excellent. Teachers work highly effectively as a team, with new staff providing a very strong contribution. Teachers structure lessons extremely well, with interesting introductions, good time for development and final plenaries, which review learning very effectively. Pace is very good, with teachers' one-to-one discussions providing very well informed support for lower attaining pupils, whilst stretching and challenging abler ones. Teachers provide interesting, often inexpensive, resources which pupils use very effectively to create high quality work, particularly in three-dimensions. The older pupils' personal development improves further because they react very positively to the requirements for individually interpretative, and expressive work. Assessment and marking are very good; it is no accident that a member of the department heads the school's work in this

area. Stimulating use of innovative ICT programs enlivens some lessons. A form of TV quiz show, for instance, using increasingly difficult questions about a project on Mexican art, fascinated and engaged pupils, and created very good learning. Other such programs also help pupils to understand assessment very effectively.

125. Curriculum leadership and the management of the department are excellent. Very good improvement since the strong position at the previous inspection combine to give the excellent provision described. The newly rebuilt team is exceptionally able, with established staff providing strong representation for the subject at senior level. The head of department is an excellent role model. Support from the headteacher is very good. Some pupils' sketchbooks are of inferior quality because the school does not provide these; this degrades the quality of some work. Although the incorporation of ICT into the pupils' curriculum is now improved, access to ICT suites outside the department is very restricted, limiting access to more powerful equipment. The department's own computers are outdated and of very limited value for creative work.

## Music

Provision in music is **excellent**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The consistently very good teaching leads to very good achievement across the school.
- The excellent curriculum leadership is providing a role model for improving teaching and learning across the school.
- High standards are achieved in extra curricular music activities.
- The curriculum in Years 7 to 9 could be broader.

## Commentary

126. Standards in the GCSE examination have been well above average for a number of years and were also well above average in 2004. This is the more impressive given that the proportion of pupils entered is almost three times the national average figure.

127. Standards at entry are broadly average. Standards of work seen in Year 9 are well above average; achievement is therefore very good. Pupils of all abilities make very good progress in their first three years at the school. For example, in a Year 9 lower ability group, excellent teaching meant that pupils worked to capacity in a performance of *Music for a large ensemble* by Reich and effectively produced their own compositions using pieces of paper.

128. The standards of those who start the GCSE course in Year 10 are broadly average. In Year 11, standards of work seen are well above average. Again, achievement is very good. For example, in a Year 10 lesson on African music, pupils were immediately involved in echo drumming with the teacher. Excellent planning and well timed activities culminated in pupils achieving very high standards of polyrhythmic improvisation. Pupils' literacy skills are very well supported by the department's work. Pupils discuss their work using specific musical terminology and oral discussion is a strength of class discussions on how performances and compositions can be improved. Numeracy skills are enhanced in practical work involving cyclical patterns characteristic of gamelan and minimalist musical structures



129. Overall, teaching and learning are very good at all levels. Teaching ranges from good to excellent, but is mainly very good. Excellent features of teaching include the effectiveness of planning, the encouragement and engagement of pupils, the very effective use of time, and high expectations. The teachers' command of the subject is very good, and a range of imaginative ways and techniques is used to reinforce important teaching points. Pupils' activities are divided up into small units, interspersed with different activities. Teachers use questioning very well, and promote active discussion in class. Assessment is very good throughout the school, with pupils clearly knowing how to improve their work.
130. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour in music are very good. They work very well individually, in pairs, or in groups. They are interested and motivated in their work and contribute well to class discussion. They listen respectfully to their own and others' performances and compositions. The department makes a good contribution to pupils' literacy and numeracy skills and pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very well fostered through the department's work. Spiritual and cultural coverage, in particular is excellent.
131. Curriculum leadership is excellent. This is a unique department that is committed to developing pupils' musicianship through class music in a supportive, positive, atmosphere, where all pupils' achievements are valued. There is very good teamwork in the department, and teachers are committed to improving teaching, learning and achievement further. The department needs to widen the opportunities for pupils to use computers and to compose music in Years 7 to 9. The head of department is an Advanced Skills Teacher who is actively involved in raising standards of teaching, learning and achievement in a number of both secondary and primary schools. Extra curricular music is very good, with a wide range of enrichment activities offered beyond the curriculum. The school's percussion ensembles have achieved national recognition in the National Festival of Music for Youth as part of the Schools' Youth Prom at the Royal Albert Hall and in the Royal Festival Hall. These activities contribute greatly to the pupils' cultural and aesthetic development.
132. Improvement since the previous inspection has been good, with teaching, assessment and extra curricular music remaining very good. There has been a reduction in class sizes following the previous reports' recommendations and this has greatly facilitated group and paired work in music, thus helping to raise achievement further. There is now a computer room dedicated to music, which is well used in Years 10 and 11. The department continues to make a significant contribution to school life.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

Provision in physical education is **satisfactory**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Teachers work well together as a team and they are committed to improvement.
- Not enough time is allocated for core physical education in Year 11 and this constrains achievement.
- The school's GCSE examination results are improving.
- Unsatisfactory attitudes and behaviour of a significant minority of pupils adversely affects participation and achievement in some groups.

## Commentary

133. At the end of Year 11, the GCSE results in 2004 were broadly average. These results show an improvement from the previous years. The small cohort of girls that took GCSE did not do as well as the boys.
134. In Year 9, the standards of work seen are below average, which represents satisfactory achievement from the below average position when pupils start at the school. Pupils show rudimentary competence in football, hockey and basketball. Overall, basic skills are not yet well enough developed to be applied effectively in games. Last year, the teachers' own assessments of standards in Year 9 were significantly higher than the evidence of the inspection. By Year 11 standards seen in core physical education lessons remain below average, which represents unsatisfactory achievement. The below average standards and unsatisfactory achievement are a consequence of insufficient time allocation in Year 11 and the non-participation of a significant number of both boys and girls. However, GCSE pupils are well motivated and their work is of average standard in Year 11, which represents satisfactory achievement. In the majority of activities, boys out perform girls. In the majority of lessons seen pupils make correct use of technical words. This is reinforced by word displays about the different physical education areas. Numeracy supports learning as exemplified in officiating and scoring in badminton. Written Year 10 and 11 examination work is supported by good literacy and number skills. Pupils' GCSE files show where computers have been used to research and enhance work.
135. Overall, the quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory, although there are some shortcomings. At times, learning is constrained by a group of pupils whose attitudes and behaviour are unsatisfactory, so preventing them from learning. In these less successful lessons, expectations are too low and lesson content is not matched to the pupils' needs as seen in a Year 9 gymnastics lesson. Overall, teachers have sound subject knowledge, but in a small minority of lessons, limited subject knowledge constrained pupils' achievement. Teachers do not always use a good range of teaching methods to stimulate learning. Insufficient time in lessons is spent on skill acquisition and development into small group competitive situations. Overall, teachers plan lessons well with clear objectives, which are shared with pupils, and progress against them checked at the end of the lesson. Teachers establish good routines that allow them to involve pupils in peer- and self- evaluation. In the best lessons, teaching has good pace and challenge and pupils respond well as exemplified in the development of rallying in a Year 10 badminton lesson. Digital cameras are successfully used to support analysis of performance. Pupils successfully learn correct terminology, scoring, games etiquette, and simple officiating. Pupils with special educational needs, those with English as an additional language, and the gifted and talented pupils, are well supported by teachers, and they achieve as well as their peers. About a fifth of the school's pupils take part in a programme of extra curricular activities, which allows good opportunities to enhance and extend pupils' learning, especially for talented pupils.
136. Curriculum leadership and management are satisfactory. The newly appointed head of department is developing a culture of improvement. Good teamwork, routines and organisation enable the department to run smoothly. The department has made satisfactory progress since the previous inspection. There has been an improvement in GCSE results and staffing difficulties have been resolved. Documentation and risk assessments have yet to be updated; the development plan lacks sufficient criteria to measure the progress the department is making. The observation of teaching is

insufficiently developed in order to share good practice. The department is working well together and is committed to improving standards.

## **BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES**

*As a result of some staff absence during the inspection week, business education could only be sampled. Two lessons of GCSE business studies were observed, and one in business communication.*

137. In the 2004 GCSE examinations in business studies results were well above the national average and the trend in recent years has been of steady improvement. Boys perform better than girls, too many of whom do not complete the course. There were no examination results in 2004 for business communication. Standards in work seen and in lessons in the business studies course were above average, representing good achievement from their broadly average position when they started the course. There was insufficient evidence of standards to make a judgement on achievement in business communication.

138. In the two business studies lessons seen, the pupils' achievement can be related to good teaching characterised by interesting tasks and good use of question and answer techniques, which boys especially enjoyed. Mutual respect and warm relationships created an atmosphere in which pupils want to learn, but the written tasks needed to be more demanding, with opportunities for greater extended writing. In the one lesson of business communication observed, teaching was poor, with low expectations, a lack of challenge, under-use of resources, and poor class management. The attitude and behaviour of the pupils were poor, and very little learning took place.

139. Department documentation is sparse, and there is little evidence of effective systems to monitor and manage the work of the department.

## **PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP**

*Because of the organisation of the two-week timetable, no citizenship lessons could be seen. Personal, social and health education (PSHE) lessons were sampled.*

140. Citizenship is taught as a discrete subject to all pupils every two weeks. It is not possible to make a judgement on the quality of teaching and learning in citizenship because no lessons were taught during the week of the inspection. The curriculum for citizenship and other areas now meets statutory requirements, and teaching has made a good start towards introducing and embedding this subject. Pupils develop skills of participation and responsible action through a variety of activities, such as completing an induction book for Year 6 pupils or helping at a Fair Trade fund raising event, and record their achievements in their contact books. Other subjects of the curriculum also contribute towards pupils' learning in citizenship. Some excellent practice was seen in Year 9 art, for example, where pupils were expected to exercise their democratic responsibilities by negotiating decisions and sticking with them.

141. A small number of PSHE lessons was seen during the inspection. Teaching was satisfactory and pupils behaved well, although teachers sometimes dominated the lessons too much, with pupils not being given enough opportunities to take an active part in the lesson and therefore not able to show what they had achieved. Guest speakers, including an ex-student of the school, spoke enthusiastically in two sixth

form lessons about gap years and opportunities to participate in charitable work in Asian and African schools.

## SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM

The table below shows entry and performance information for courses completed in 2004. Only subjects entering six or more candidates are listed here.

### 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
General studies	12	100	73.6	8.3	6.9	29.2	25.5
Psychology	14	100	67.8	14.3	15.1	30.0	23.2

### 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
AVCE business	26	96.2	91.6	26.9	24.1	75.4	67.9
AVCE ICT	28	89.3	88.3	64.3	26.9	90.0	67.8
Art and design	11	100	98.3	54.5	50.2	98.2	87.1
Drama	13	100	99.6	30.8	42.8	76.9	85.1
English literature	21	100	99.4	33.3	44.9	76.2	85.5
General studies	29	82.8	94.9	27.6	30.5	63.4	72.9
History	6	100	99.0	0	45.6	73.3	85.1
Mathematics	13	100	96.8	46.2	56.6	89.2	89.5
Psychology	11	100	97.4	18.2	42.5	67.3	81.6
Physics	7	85.7	96.7	42.9	45.3	74.3	82.6
Religious studies	10	100	99.1	60.0	49.5	98.0	87.4

## ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

*English literature was the focus subject. German was sampled.*

142. In an AS German lesson in Year 12, the planning of the lesson was satisfactory. However, the students' achievement and learning were unsatisfactory because there was not enough pace and challenge in the teaching. The relationships between the teacher and the students were good.

### English

The provision for English literature is **good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve well because of good teaching.
- Procedures for assessment are good, and students are tracked well.
- The students' good attitudes mean that they will take an active part in lessons, answering questions and contributing to discussion well.
- There is not enough emphasis in lesson planning on independence in learning.

### Commentary

143. Results in the 2004 A-level examination were below average. Given the students' below average standards on entry they performed as expected. Numbers taking the 2003 AS examination were too small to make meaningful comparisons with national statistics. Examination data show that male students do less well than females, but numbers are small, and no difference was observed in the performance of the two sexes during the inspection. The rate of completion is good.

144. Standards in the current Year 13 are broadly average, and this represents good achievement for these particular students. Students show good knowledge of the texts they are studying, though their understanding of the socio-historical background of the literature is less good. Higher attainers are analytical in their writing, and illustrate their essays well, drawing effectively from the text. Middle attainers write confidently and accurately, with a mixture of description and analysis. Lower attaining students show some technical weaknesses in their writing, and do not always link the points they are making to the specific question being asked. Most students have developed satisfactory study skills, annotating and classifying relevant information, though the range of material they comment on, sometimes from the Internet, and sometimes from books, is not wide.

145. Teaching and learning are good. Specialist teachers with good subject knowledge plan the lessons well, and try to involve all students. The previous inspection report commented that tables were seldom arranged to encourage a seminar approach to the learning. Though the seminar approach was used in half the lessons observed, learning is still very closely controlled by teachers, so that questions and answers go from the teacher to the students, who rarely challenge each other. This tends to be more true of Year 13 than of Year 12. Teachers are careful to ensure that students know what the lesson will cover, but they do not phrase this information as an objective. As a result, the summing up at the end of the lesson does not identify who has, and who has not, achieved the objective, nor is it referred to during the lesson. The good assessment procedures mean that students know their personal targets,

their predicted grades, and what they need to do to improve. However, though marking is encouraging and reinforces the aspects in which the students do well, oral discussion of points for improvement mean that students have no written record of these, and this does not help them when revising.

146. Communication skills are developed well, with good attention to written and spoken vocabulary. Teachers are good role models in their use of English. Satisfactory use is made of the application of number: a good example of graphs and timelines showing the life spans and dates of writing of the First World War poets was seen. Students make satisfactory use of ICT for research purposes and to present their work.
147. Curriculum leadership is good. Morale is good in the very small team of teachers that shares the sixth form work. A good range of trips and visits is organised to enrich the curriculum. There has been satisfactory improvement since the previous inspection: results are not as good as they were in 2002, but achievement remains good, and improvements in assessment have led to closer monitoring.

## **MATHEMATICS**

The provision in mathematics is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Standards in examinations are rising.
- Good teaching and learning have led to good achievement.
- Students have developed very good levels of independent study.
- ICT is not used enough in the teaching.

### **Commentary**

148. The A-level results in 2004 were average compared to all schools, an improvement on those of 2003. Boys' performance was above the national average for boys, whilst the girls' performance was average in relation to that for girls. Mathematics is one of the better performing subjects in the school. Standards in the two-year AS course were well above the national average in 2004 for the five students concerned.
149. Standards at the start of the A-level course are below average. By the end of Year 13, standards are average, reflecting good achievement. Students have a good understanding of calculus. Standards are rising in Year 12, and work seen suggests that they are above average now from average standards at the start for this group, also good achievement. Their algebraic skills are above average. The standard of Year 13 students on the two-year AS course is well above average, reflecting very good achievement from their GCSE results at intermediate level. Year 12 students on this course are achieving satisfactorily. Their levels of algebraic skill are not yet good enough for the demands of the course. Overall, the retention rate on sixth form A-level courses is good. A notable feature in Year 12 is the good achievement of students in the re-sit GCSE group, as a greater number are at GCSE grade C than is usually the case nationally, due to good teaching. Application of number and literary skills are above average.
150. Teaching is good in the sixth form, ranging in individual lessons from satisfactory to very good. The strengths of the teaching are the subject expertise of the teachers and the encouragement and engagement of the students in their learning. Good subject expertise ensures fluent explanations that provide clear, accurate, and precise information from which students learn well. Students have been encouraged to develop their own methods of private study. They work very well at home on set work, using their initiative well to determine what other work is necessary. In the very good lessons, teaching is at a very good pace, always having

something new to enhance learning through the very good challenges to students' thinking skills. However, ICT needs to be used more in the teaching to promote a better rate of visual learning, particularly in graph work. The oral contributions by students in some lessons are not always sufficient for a good rate of learning, lacking the repetition of basic facts for essential rote learning, for example.

151. Curriculum leadership is good. Leadership has set out good developmental plans for the department. Management of the GCSE re-sit group in Year 12 has been effective in raising the standards of the lower attaining students. The success of the two-year course for lower attaining sixth form AS students is a good development. Management is good, as assessment and monitoring have improved sharply since the last inspection. Standards are rising. Improvement since the previous inspection has been good.

## SCIENCE

*The focus subject was physics, but work was also sampled in biology and chemistry.*

152. Examination results in biology were below average in 2003, but improved significantly in 2004, although there was a small entry. In a very good Year 13 lesson about the digestion of food, the teacher showed very good command of the subject, and students were very involved in their learning.
153. In chemistry, recent examination results have been well below average, and the number of students rather low. A good Year 13 lesson about activation energy was observed; students worked well, the pace of learning was good, but overall standards were below average.

## Physics

Provision in physics is **very good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Curriculum leadership in physics is very good.
- Teaching is good, and often very good.
- Students are keen to learn, and show enjoyment of the subject.
- Learning resources are unsatisfactory.

### Commentary

154. Overall standards in the 2003 and 2004 physics A-level examinations were below average, particularly in the proportion of students gaining the higher grades. However, overall standards on entry to the course in Year 12 are also below average. Analysis of school data shows that students' achievements were satisfactory in 2003, and good in 2004. A significant proportion of students obtained grades above their target level. There are very few female students, but those in Year 12 are well integrated and clearly enjoy the subject.
155. Students from a wide range of attainment at GCSE level are permitted to take the A-level course. In work seen during the inspection, therefore, even when students worked under close supervision by their teacher, standards were below average, but achievement was good. Students are very involved in their work, and enjoy the challenges provided by their teacher. They have a good attitude to learning, and have



formed a very good working relationship with their teacher. Most of them readily ask for help when finding difficulties. Although the number of students is often rather low, retention rates are high. A significant proportion is interested in pursuing courses in higher education linked to physics.

156. The quality of teaching is good overall, and often very good in individual lessons. The work is very well planned, with an emphasis on challenging students and making them think. The teaching uses a range of strategies to involve all students in the lessons. There is regular use of questions to elicit their recall of previous work, and their grasp of both theory work and practical observations. They are given the opportunity therefore to develop a good understanding of the principles of physics. Homework is set regularly, but students' response to this is variable. Moreover, they do not always respond positively to the teacher's suggestions after marking their assessments. These tests are set regularly, helping to consolidate the work, and they are thoroughly marked using A-level grades. As a result, students know whether they are performing at their target levels, and they receive advice about how to improve. However, there is insufficient monitoring to ensure that they act on this advice. Computers are increasingly used to enhance learning, both by the teacher and students. Students' communication skills are improved through discussion exercises and in presentations to their peers. There is also a good contribution to students' application of number through the regular use of formulae, graphs and calculations.
157. The teacher in charge of physics is experienced, knowledgeable, and enjoys teaching at AS and A- level. Her curriculum leadership of the subject is very good. Planning of the course is detailed, and ensures good progression in learning. Further development of the use of ICT is limited by a lack of funds; there has been insufficient investment in computer hardware, electrical meters, and equipment such as sensors. Management of the subject is good, but there is insufficient analysis of data to systematically identify strengths and weaknesses, and improve standards.
158. Since the previous inspection, the physics department has maintained its high standards of provision. There are still some difficulties with the accommodation, but overall progress has been satisfactory. The recruitment of another physics specialist is a priority in order that the subject enjoys a higher profile in Years 7 to 11, and also to provide students in the sixth form with a greater width of experience in teaching and understanding.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Teachers have a very good subject knowledge and understanding of examination board requirements which they convey to the students, ensuring they achieve very well.
- There are excellent resources for students, giving them good access to modern ICT facilities.
- Assessment of coursework is good, and students are given clear advice on how to improve.

- Retention rates on the two-year course need to be improved to ensure that all students receive accreditation.

## Commentary

159. Results for the AVCE ICT vocational course at the end of Year 13 were very high in 2003 and in 2004 were well above average. Students do better in ICT when compared with other subjects.
160. Standards on entry into the sixth form are well below average, and in Year 13, standards of work seen are well above average, making achievement very good. In the practical lessons seen, students were able to use advanced features of databases and are confident in the use of Visual Basic. Additional classes are available after school to enable higher attaining students to develop their programming skills. With guidance, students understand the principles of installing and uninstalling software and are able to undertake this, working as an effective team. Coursework is well presented, showing good literacy skills. Numerical skills are developed through the use of advanced features of spreadsheets. Students produce comprehensive user and technical manuals. Testing strategies are present, although not always fully implemented.
161. Teaching in the AVCE course is good; its impact is enhanced by very effective assessment. Students learn well and are highly motivated. The teachers who deliver the course have good subject knowledge, and they are able to answer student questions quickly and accurately. They have a very good understanding of the examination board requirements and give students clear guidelines on how they can improve. Relationships between staff and students are constructive and students are supported in lessons to ensure they all make very good progress. Although in some lessons the pace is slow, in others a very good use of presentation software stimulates student interest, accelerating learning. Assessment of coursework is very thorough and students know what they must do to improve their work.
162. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Documentation was available on assessment and each unit is well supported by good planning. No documentation specific to sixth form development was made available at the time of the inspection. Most of the teaching in the sixth form is by longer serving members of the department based close to the sixth form centre, giving them a high profile in the sixth form, and making them available to support students. However, retention rates on the two-year course are low, and about half the students leave the course at the end of Year 12 to seek employment, with most receiving no accreditation. Progress since the last inspection in the discrete sixth form ICT course is good because improved ICT resources are available to maintain good achievement.

## HUMANITIES

*Psychology was inspected in full; geography and government and politics were sampled.*

163. In the Year 13 lesson in geography that was sampled, students achieved well as a result of good teaching. A Year 13 lesson was seen in government and politics, where teaching and learning were good. Standards were average and students achieved well in group work, preparing for a debate for and against the Euro in their next lesson. Students supported their points knowledgeably and argued fluently. Learning was well supported by a good range of resources.

## Psychology

Provision in psychology is **unsatisfactory**.

## Main strengths and weaknesses

- A-level results are well below average and achievement is unsatisfactory.
- Teaching and learning are satisfactory in lessons but unsatisfactory overall.
- Students' progress is not being assessed and monitored systematically.
- Unsatisfactory leadership and management result in a lack of clear direction for the provision for psychology

## Commentary

164. The 2004 GCE A-level results, the first since psychology was introduced in 2002, were well below average. Current standards of work seen in Year 13 are also well below average, reflecting unsatisfactory achievement when compared with students' below average standards at GCSE. Four students are taking the subject in Year 13, which is about half the number studying the subject in last year's Year 12. There are 23 students in the current Year 12 group.
165. Students' knowledge of the psychological concepts, theories and research studied is sound in the case of higher attaining students, but overall it is basic, and confined to the work of a limited range of theorists. Students' understanding, together with their recall of earlier learning, is often insecure. Year 13 students, for example, had a basic knowledge of Freud's theories and research relating to phobias, but their understanding of these was insecure. They made no comparisons with the work of other theorists. They showed poor recall of earlier learning and struggled to identify different forms of conditioning. Students lacked confidence in contributing to the lesson. Year 12 students, similarly, had basic knowledge of the assumptions made by the psychodynamic model of abnormality, and were aware of some factors influencing the validity of psychological experiments and research, but they were working mostly at superficial levels with relatively little depth of understanding. Written work is mostly brief, lacking in structure, detail, explanation and evaluation. That of higher attaining students is more detailed and usually accurate, but factors are not fully considered and linked, and there are weaknesses in sustained argument and conclusions. The work of other students reflects limited knowledge of a few research studies but writing styles are weak, and questions are sometimes not understood. Communication skills are competent but numeracy and ICT skills are underused.
166. The quality of teaching and learning is unsatisfactory. Although teaching in lessons seen was satisfactory, discussion with students and scrutiny of their work shows greater weaknesses. Lessons have strengths in the clarity of presentations and the use of Power Point and the overhead projector to support these. Classroom relationships are very good, and students follow presentations closely. In some lessons, there is good reinforcement of learning, but this is not always the case. In many lessons, not enough attention is given to ensuring that complex psychological approaches and theories are fully understood by students of all abilities. Group work is helpful in enabling students to work together. Year 12 students responded very well to the opportunity for them to work together in exploring the validity of psychological experiments. However, often the tasks set are not sufficiently demanding and in some instances they are repetitive. For example, the same relatively undemanding task of word association on the same topic was set in both Year 12 and Year 13 lessons. Group work is not monitored and guided. Questioning is not sufficiently demanding in enabling students to develop and explain points, and there is not enough encouragement for them to become more confident in doing so. There is little comparison and evaluation of different psychological theories. Students are not given enough guidance about the requirements of the examination specification or of the standards expected. Marking does not give sufficiently specific guidance for

improvement. Assessment is not thorough enough and data is not used to track students' progress against their prior attainment.

167. Insufficient attention is given to the leadership and management of the psychology, which is unsatisfactory. The teacher in charge of the subject also teaches two other subjects. Monitoring, review, and development planning are weak and not well supported by line management arrangements. Schemes of work are undeveloped and fail to provide guidance for teaching and learning. There are no formal procedures to ensure that the two teachers liaise appropriately to ensure consistency and continuity of teaching and learning. There are insufficient opportunities for weaknesses in teaching to be addressed through rigorous lesson observation and professional development. Comparison with the last inspection is not possible, as the subject was not inspected.

## **ENGINEERING, TECHNOLOGY AND MANUFACTURING**

*The focus subject was home economics. Work in systems and control was also sampled.*

168. In the Year 12 systems and control lesson observed, standards were average. Projects allowed for students to develop areas of interest and extend their skills. Students had very good access to ICT, which they used to advantage to aid designing and presentation of work. Good technical support was available to the students to help them in the use of CAD/CAM when making their product.

### **Home Economics**

Provision for home economics is **good**.

#### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Students show very good attitudes in lessons and they work well collaboratively.
- Good teaching enables students to carry out in-depth research independently.

- Assessment is informative and helps students to know what they have to do to improve.
- Teaching styles lack variety in some lessons.

## **Commentary**

169. Students may opt for A-level home economics or for systems and control. Standards in the A-level home economics course are average. Classes in Years 12 and 13 are small and half of the students gained grades A to B in both AS and A-level in 2004. Retention rates are excellent for students continuing to A-level, but there is a slight loss of students at the early stages of taking AS.
170. Overall, achievement is good. The students start the course with below average standards, but by Year 13, standards of work seen are average. Students have a sound understanding of nutrition and its application. Students' independent research studies are wide ranging, covering sociological and often psychological aspects of their study. Students bring very good attitudes to their work. They work hard and support each other in their learning. During the lessons seen there was very good collaborative working where students' ideas were valued and extended upon both by the teacher and each other. This established a very good working ethos. Students use ICT very well to present coursework to a high standard
171. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Teachers give students very good support to guide and increase their knowledge and skills within the subject. They help students to plan their work effectively to ensure that deadlines are met and work covered to the required depth. Students demonstrate good analytical and evaluative skills in their independent research topics as a result of thoughtful teaching. Teachers' well planned lessons set a brisk pace and ensure that students make progress, but occasionally teaching styles lack variety. There are limited opportunities for visits and enrichment activities, which would enable students to apply their understanding to commercial and business aspects of the subject.
172. Assessment is good. Teachers mark students' work very thoroughly and give constructive advice on how to improve it to obtain their target grade. All students are aware of their predicted grade and they set themselves high expectations, which are reinforced by their teachers.
173. Leadership and management are good. Good teamwork and sharing of practice helps to ensure that the course meets their needs and interests. Teachers have a strong commitment to the students, and this is appreciated by them. Overall, improvement since the previous inspection has been satisfactory.

## **VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA**

*Art was the focus subject. Work in music and drama was sampled.*

174. Only small numbers follow music courses to A-level, so that comparisons with national averages are statistically unreliable. One Year 12 lesson was sampled during the inspection, where very good teaching led to above average levels of understanding of improvisation.
175. During a good Year 13 drama lesson, students made good progress in preparing a text for performance. Standards were average and there were many examples of

supportive evaluation of each other's work. Good teaching enabled the students to achieve well.

## **Art**

Provision in art is **excellent**.

## Main strengths and weaknesses

- Excellent teaching and learning lead to high levels of achievement, particularly in Year 12.
- Students produce an exciting and stimulating range of work in 2-D and 3-D media.
- Many students' work shows evidence of strong personal development and self-expression.
- ICT resources are out-dated and unsuitable for current sixth form requirements.

## Commentary

176. The A-level results in 2004 were well above average. Over half of the students gained A grades. Boys' performance was particularly good. Standards in the two current year groups are very different, and reflect the variations in intake quality from year to year. Year 12 is a very strong year, with many students taking the subject. Here, students' very large-scale two- and three-dimensional work is lively and imaginative. These students also produce very good work when key skills such as drawing and painting are practised. In Year 12, standards in work seen are well above average, and achievement is high in relation to their below average standards at entry to the course. Year 12 students are developing and refining skills effectively, whilst simultaneously cultivating their own style and flair across an imaginative range of approaches. Many students' work shows excellent self-development and personal reflection.
177. Year 13 is a much smaller group, who entered the sixth form with a relatively low skills base. The requirements of an AS level course were very challenging for some, so results were relatively low, and several are re-sitting this examination. Students are achieving better now they are in Year 13, but some have a lot of ground to make up. Standards of work amongst the few Year 13 students entering A-level are currently about average; achievement is very good, however.
178. Teaching and learning are excellent, particularly in Year 12, where responses from students are extremely positive. The Year 13 group remains relatively undynamic, despite staff's best efforts to provoke better learning. Teachers provide a very good range of effective opportunities such as a recent visit to Kew Gardens, to stimulate sixth formers' creative responses. These and other options such as life drawing classes, have a very positive impact on students' standards and achievements. Relationships with students are excellent, based on mutual respect and very high expectations and challenge. Some students are therefore able to express a deep level of personal experience through their artwork. Extremely well focused assessment of each individual's work, both orally and in writing, provides all students with a very clear idea about where improvement is needed, without compromising the individuality of their own ideas. Communication skills are very well promoted and integrated into students' work, through giving oral presentations about their work for instance, sometimes using an ICT package.
179. Leadership of the subject at sixth form level is excellent. Retention rates have been very good in recent years. Management of recent changes, particularly in staffing, has also been exceptionally effective in maintaining and improving standards. The very good position described in the last report has been improved further. Results at A-level have improved significantly. Students now use ICT very creatively in all their work. This is despite the out-dated computers in the department and increasingly difficult access to the school's ICT suites. These issues threaten the improved standards in this aspect

of students' work. The department is very well placed to lead a specialist arts college application because of the extremely effective leadership and management of the subject across the school. Work from the department provides excellent displays around the school, creating an environment where visual art is celebrated and valued. Improvement since the previous inspection has been good.



## HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

*The focus subject was the one-year vocational leisure and tourism course. Work in physical education was sampled.*

180. Two theory lessons in physical education were seen. In the Year 12 lesson students looked at the electrical systems that cause the heart to work; Year 13 analysed physical performance using video replay. In both lessons seen teaching, learning and achievement were satisfactory; standards seen were below average.

### Vocational leisure and tourism

The provision in vocational leisure and tourism is **good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The teachers have good subject knowledge, and apply it well in their teaching.
- Students have good attitudes, which enhance learning.
- The programme is well matched to the needs of individual students.
- Students make good use of ICT to research topics.

### Commentary

181. In 2004, students took an Intermediate GNVQ in leisure and tourism; results were above average. Students gained results in line with their predictions. Leisure and tourism is offered in Years 12 as a vocational course to a small cohort of students. The majority of the students comes from minority ethnic backgrounds and have English as their second language. The course is well matched to their needs.

182. The current Year 12 students started this course with standards that are well below average. Students have now completed over two-thirds of this course and the standards of work seen are now below average. They are well motivated and want to learn, and they are achieving well. The majority of students have a limited knowledge of the UK. They are just starting to know some of our tourist locations. They rapidly explore a range of web sites to understand the key features that attract tourists to such places as Stonehenge and Dartmoor. In discussion students are not confident; however, when using the computer they feel more confident and give a better response. They rely heavily on materials from the Internet. Many offer good descriptions about tourist sites, but evaluations tend to be rather simplistic. Work scrutiny shows the application of number skills is supported by use of graphs. Whilst writing is brief, communication is enhanced by regular use of key words. The teacher has individualised work and the small class size enables good oral work to check understanding.

183. Teaching and learning are good. Students achieve well because they are well taught. Students benefit from well planned lessons and the good subject knowledge of the teacher, who uses a wide range of resources to heighten interest and encourage discussion. Much of the work seen is individualised, and students work well on a one-to-one basis; they respond enthusiastically to questions. The teacher encourages students to discuss aspects of tourism but there is some reticence to enter into debate. Attitudes are consistently good and students are continually striving to do well. The

course now needs to expand beyond the classroom and create opportunities for hands-on work in practical situations in the world of travel and tourism. Students' work is thoroughly marked, and they are given good advice on how to improve their own performance. Lessons incorporate a range of activities that interest and engage students actively in lessons. Teachers are knowledgeable about the examination requirements and bring a range of experience to support learning. This raises students' self-confidence and leads to them achieving well.

184. Curriculum leadership and management are good. The introduction of the alternative pathway has improved the match of the leisure and tourism curriculum to students' needs. The co-ordinator has a sense of vision and has good expectations of the students. Planning, organisation and the preparation of appropriate teaching materials are good and the course is being regularly reviewed and developed. There was no report on leisure and tourism in the previous inspection report.

## **BUSINESS**

*Work in business AVCE was sampled.*

185. Two AVCE business lessons were sampled in Year 12. In both cases, students with very modest GCSE profiles were producing coursework of a far higher standard than one would expect; achievement was very good. This reflected very detailed assessment guidelines to ensure that the work met requirements. Teaching provided good support for individuals, posing questions to promote improvement; students worked with great industry. In examined work, however, most students perform at much lower standards, because they do not have a secure understanding of what they are doing, and cannot apply or evaluate what they know with any confidence.

## **PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT AND GENERAL PROGRAMMES**

*Work in AS general studies was sampled.*

186. An AS general studies lesson was sampled in Year 12. Students made good progress and worked hard during a lesson on government revenue and expenditure. Teaching, learning and achievement were all good.

## PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgement</i>	<i>Sixth form grade</i>	<i>School grade</i>
<b>The overall effectiveness of the sixth form and the school</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>4</b>
How inclusive the school is		3
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	3	3
Cost effectiveness of the sixth form / value for money provided by the school	4	4
<b>Overall standards achieved</b>		<b>3</b>
Pupils' achievement	3	3
<b>Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities (ethos)</b>		<b>4</b>
Attendance	3	3
Attitudes	3	4
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	3	5
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development		4
<b>The quality of education provided by the school</b>		<b>4</b>
The quality of teaching	3	3
How well pupils learn	3	3
The quality of assessment	3	3
How well the curriculum meets pupils needs	4	4
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities		4
Accommodation and resources	4	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	4	5
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents		4
The quality of the school's links with the community	3	3
The school's links with other schools and colleges	4	4
<b>The leadership and management of the school</b>		<b>3</b>
The governance of the school	3	3
The leadership of the headteacher		3
The leadership of other key staff	3	4
The effectiveness of management	3	3

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

Zuletzt: Gut und/oder The final Section 10 report after 12 years as RgJ

